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IN OLD CEYLON

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BY

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AUTHOR OF
"MY ROCK GARDEN," "ALPINES AND BOG PLANTS,"
"THE GARDEN OF ASIA," ETC.

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À LA TRÈS-HAULTE ET TRÈS-BÉNIGNE PRINCESSE

MA DAME MARGUERITE,

ROYNE DE SARÂWA

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"Vain the ambition of kings
Who seek, by trophies and dead things,
To leave a living name behind,
Yet weave but traps to catch the wind."

IN OLD CEYLON

PART I

PRELIMINARIES

CHAPTER I

COLOMBO

HULL down, hull down, lies Lanka, sleeping island of the saints. But already for several days the air has been soft with its scented odour of sanctity. Faint breezes of perfume hover and linger round the ship as she dreams her way across the surface of a flawless opal sea. And each night the calm dark sweetness of the tropics thrills yet more and more poignantly about us; the tender warmth of the South lays its fingers on our heart-strings, and sets them dancing to strange unaccustomed tunes. Everything heralds the approach of fairyland—of that beautiful dream-Paradise which is the very kingdom of heaven on earth—the land for ever consecrated to holy feet that never lighted there. And so at last one rises, in the blazing morning, to the reality of sweltering Colombo.

Colombo, city of small account, has no place in the existence of Lanka. Colombo is a modern ugly mushroom, a convenience, an invention of modern ugly races that were ravening in blue woad when Asoka ruled the East, that were jabbering inarticulate jargon when the Most Perfect One was incarnate for the last time on

earth. And an ill reality makes Colombo, a discordant awakening from the fragrant dreams and ecstasies through which the wanderer approaches Lanka by the gateway of calm radiant dawns, and sunsets all a benign blare of fire. Flat, flat is the land here, and the town that squatters along its shore—flat as an old stale story that was never interesting. From the ship, in the quivering glare of morning, one gleans an impression of red huddled buildings, grime and energy. Red is all Colombo when you land—red the tall buildings, red the roads, and red, too, the rare flame of Spathodea, which, for the rest, cannot thrive nor show its full magnificence in this low and torrid climate of Colombo. And, up and down, in shade or glare, runs furiously the unresting tide of life. The main street is walled in by high, barrack-like structures, fiercely western in the heart of the holy East, and the big hotels upon its frontage extend their uncompromising European façades. Within them there is a perpetual twilight, and meek puss-faced Cinhalese take perpetually the drink-orders of prosperous planters and white-whiskered old fat gentlemen in sun-hats lined with green. At night these palaces are ablaze with lights and bands—visible realization of earthly pleasure to poor toiling souls from the farthest lonely heights of the mountains and the jungle.

Shops, too, for the allurement of the casual traveller, line the way. Here is a gigantic storehouse of mixed treasures, where you go to follow the example of the elderly gentlemen and purchase a sun-hat; where you remain to con the multitudinous cases full of silver and ivory atrocities from Japan, made up by the gross for European consumption in that most arrogant country of craftsmen, where insult is touched off as lightly and with the same sure skill as perfect beauty. Then there are embroideries

—Turkish, Algerian, Cashmiri, what you will—everything except Cinhalese. Next door, perhaps, outlined against the cool dusk of his shop, the gesticulations of a smiling Moorman invite you in to see his jewels, or else his clamorous, pimp-like boys rush to prey upon you in the open street and drag you in. And once allured, there is no escape. Blandly smiling, the fat spider lays before you tray upon tray of treasures, all lying loose on their broad platters of black velvet—pierced rough turquoise from the farthest mountains of the North; opals, frail and feminine, palpitating with Australian sunshine; green lumps of jade or emerald. Then come the stones of Ceylon itself, for opal, diamond, turquoise, and emerald are aliens in Lanka; nor, with rare exception, can the Cinhalese ruby enter into any sort of rivalry with his blood-hot cousin of Burma—in fact, Cinhalese rubies are about as inferior as Burmese sapphires. And it is the sapphire that is lord of Lanka—the sapphire in forms and shapes and colours unknown to the Western world, where the sapphire is always thought of as the deep rich blue which is black by night. Here, though, there are sapphires shallow, light and cheerful—pale azure sapphires, golden-gleaming sapphires, apricot-coloured sapphires, sapphires clear as dew at dawn, sapphires green as calm water, sapphires in every shade of gentle lilac to a fulminating violet, and so on into the rich reds where sapphire merges with ruby, the same stone under another name and colour. And all these lie heaped and piled before us, for the casual comer, it seems, to play with at his will. On their trays they make jumbled rainbows; one may take up brimming handfuls of jewels and let them trickle through one's fingers in the sunlight—a rivulet of radiance, dewdrops crystallized and indestructible in their prismatic glory. Back they tumble, jingling, and lie in

a kaleidoscope of bright wonders, shifting, sparkling, vanishing as you paddle them to and fro with careless finger.

Then the procession of jewels continues. Sapphire has not yet shown you all it can do. From little brown canvas bags, such as those in which we Westerners sometimes carry mere contemptible sovereigns when we are so fortunate as to possess them, comes bounding forth, upon beds of snow-white paper, the moony refulgence of the star-stones. Of a soft dove-grey is the typical star-sapphire, of a tender, clouded, milky blue, of pearly tones like a mountain mist, or softly cerulean as the bluebell; and, grey or white or blue, always there nestles at its heart a floating six-rayed star of pure light, that shifts and wavers across the surface of the stone as you move it to and fro. In the old days, the cutters who roped the Kings of Lanka in chains of ruby and cat's-eye had the art of so cutting these star-stones that ripple after ripple of radiance followed hard upon each other's heels as the jewel turned this way and that. But the secret lies long buried in the heart of dead Ceylon, and nowadays we must be contented with the hexagonal prism across that lovely clouded surface.

And then, from its dreaming blues, the star-sapphire advances into delicate mauves and lilacs, into curdled purples and a soft, clouded crimson. And now, lo and behold, it is star-ruby, the same and not the same. And they vary indefinitely, these stars: some are flawed and flecked; some have bright clear beams upon a soapy, indeterminate ground; some have a rich, satisfying china-blue, and yet no clean ray; yet others lose their gleam through an excess of transparency, or through their mass distract it by threads and undulations of a deeper colour than their ground. Rare indeed it is to find a star-sapphire that shall combine clear-

ness and brilliancy of star with solid true blue for its foundation; fine star, as a rule, spells indifferent colour: fine colour, a vague, unsatisfactory star. Then, after the stars, come the cabochons—round-cut, like frozen drops of coloured water, lucent, diaphanous, without spark, except at the one point where, like a dew-globe, they catch the light. These too, stars lacking the silk, have every colour of their kind—milky, opalescent, amethystine, azure, wine-dark, rosy, mauve and grey ; for, when a sapphire crystal in the rough is seen to be sheeny and silky in appearance, filled with abundant, innumerable threads of opacity—so innumerable, indeed, that they fill the whole pebble, and impart the characteristic sheen to its surface, then cunning artificers recognize a star, and by careful cutting elicit the more or less perfect six-sided ray that the all-" silked " stones hold to a greater or lesser degree. The cabochons are of different calibre—devoid of silk and star, yet, for one reason or another, not deserving of being facetted and turned into brilliants.

But, if you remain unwillingly cold to these delights, the Moormen-jewellers of Colombo will go towards a safe, unlock it, and return, complacently smiling, with something wrapped in some odd end of linen or chamois-leather. And suddenly, there on the counter before you, is the ransom of a prisoned king, the honour of a crowned queen—a sapphire large as a young potato, egg-shaped, and of the pure imperial midnight blue throughout. Down sinks one's tranced gaze, and down and down and down, through depth after depth of sparkling azure, till one's soul has the illusion of being lost and drowned in illimitable profundities of blue. Soothing, narcotic, satisfying, are the luminous abysses of emerald ; kindling and amorous the blaze of blood-ruby ; coldly glorifying the white majesty of diamond ; but of them all, most

vast, most swamping, most enslaving, are the bottomless gulfs of a great blue sapphire brimming over eternally with light in the heart of its celestial darkness, and for ever throwing electric jets of radiance from each facet and ripple in its azure depths.

Or perhaps it is a big fire he shows you, calling it an orange ruby. Beware! The stone, brilliant as pure deep flame, sparkling at a thousand points, is the lord and emperor of all king-topazes indeed, but Nature has not yet presented us with anything that may fairly be called an orange ruby. Yet the king-topaz stands as far above the pallid, banal pink and yellow pebbles, cairngormish and cheap, that bear his name, as does the royal adamant above the tinny glitter of those white metallic things that are called Irish diamonds. The king-topaz stands very close to the apricot sapphire, if, indeed, he be not the same person—a flashing effulgence of sparks in every shade of soft golden rose, deepening to the tones of the fruit from which it takes its epithet. Pick out some sapphires in tints of transparent lilac and pale purple, put them with the pinky gold of the king-topaz, and you will have a notable combination indeed. Or, yet again, among fancy stones, choose out, if you have luck, a purple ruby, as they call it. This little brilliant contains at once the midnight depths of sapphire and the bloody fire of ruby, filled with alternating lights of crimson and azure, which mingle here and there into a deep imperial purple, far more luminous and profound than any of the diluted violets that you may get in an amethyst, no matter how regal. Blue tones prevail in it by day, but by night it flashes ominously red. And this shall go among the finest chrysoberyls—clear watered green deeper than aquamarine, and of a softer, lighter tone than emerald, but varying, like all these names, into many worse and better shades. These, too,

come out at night, and develop a clear and sparkling iridescence.

Another Cinhalese jewel that changes its mind by day and night is the dark, facetted alexandrite, which by day is of a deep brown or brownish green, and turns at night to an obscure claret-crimson. But in the alexandrite I have never taken much pleasure, neither of its colours having the purity that alone show beauty of soul in a precious stone. For who will doubt that all the crystals possess a deep, undiscoverable life and entity of their own? Does not the opal have its fits of anæmia and depression? the pearl its personal antipathies and predilections? the amethyst its stringent views on temperance? the chrysoprase its serviceable intuition of poison? The spinel ruby can dispel bad dreams, the oriental ruby act as a febrifuge; and the celestial sapphire grows mysteriously pale with foreknowledge of its owner's death. All these, then, have their souls and their characters, nor can I persuade myself that the alexandrite has anything but a rather muddy, indeterminate human soul, compact of neutral tints in good and evil, like the parti-coloured soul of man. And from the great jewels one asks a clearer ray, a more unmixed effulgence than any that springs from the adulterate, uncertain heart of humanity. The sapphire is pure loyalty, deep and clean as a frosty midnight; the ruby is wild love, lawless and dominant; the emerald is steadfast and victorious; the opal wayward, freakish, fantastic. In the diamond lives the hard, clear brilliance, the merciless, variegated charm of Marie Stuart; dark and red as the soul of Sidonia Bork is the soul of the spinel; and the black heart of Eirene throbs imprisoned in the depths of the imperial amethyst. Whom, then, shall we find to dwell in the pearl and the blue sheen of moonstone? The pearl, dreaming and ghostly, is surely Mélisande; and in

the pale radiance of the moonstone, elfin, remote, and simple, lives something of Joan the Maid. And I am sure that the yellow topaz, pallid and respectable, is the soul of good Queen Anne.

The moonstone, in Ceylon, you can have for the picking up. If you choose to visit the Moon Plains, you may, over those rolling expanses, gather your lapful of milky micaceous flakes and chips, which, when cut, reveal the moony refulgence that gives the jewel its name. But there are moonstones and moonstones. There is, first, the sickly and tedious stone which commonly bears the name—a mere whitish gleam, neither diaphanous nor opaque, recalling ammoniated quinine when you first begin to pour the water in. This is common of the common, abounding in brooches, ouches, pins, rings, and all the other repulsive claw-settings with which Cinhalese jewellers obscure the beauty of their stones. It is also cheaper than a sycophant's praise, and quite as dull. And then there is the true jewel, very thralled phantom of our Lady Moon. For the blue moonstone is mere moonlight, caught and held in the ghostly glimmer of water—of water faintly opalescent with a white film, but haunted with the blue glimmer of the moon. Half clear is the blue moonstone, and half clouded, altogether unearthly, phantasmal, exquisite. This is not common as the other, though still it takes no rank among stones that are fitly called precious, and can be had for prices which at home one would think ridiculous.

Indeed, Ceylon has been too much dispraised as a buying-ground for precious stones. Of course, if you go in absolute innocence, and chaffer for huge kingly sapphires, you will in all probability be heavily cheated. At least, if you try to buy in market overt; the big reputable dealers like Makan Marcar will certainly sell you good

stones—if for a fair price. Not from them is to be feared any palming-off of glass, and, at the dearest, their fine stones would fetch probably half as much again in Bond Street. And surely nowadays no one will be weak enough to haggle for coloured decanter-stoppers in the streets of Colombo; go, rather, to the good dealers, and pay a solid, reasonable price for an indisputable gem which will never bring upon you any shame or regret. I cannot understand how it came about that the late Bishop Heber can ever have been so misguided as to buy green glass for emeralds (thus, at least, runs the famous tale). For the one inviolable, unalterable quality of a jewel, eternally separating it from glass or crystal, is not its colour, but its weight; a sapphire, say, is very perceptibly heavier than a glass or crystal of the same size, and any instructed babe should, by peizing a pebble in his palm, be able to discern whether he is chaffering for products of Golconda or of the old bottle-shop. However, from the late Bishop's misfortune sprang a worse, for so obsessed was he with indignation over the fraud, which he himself had made possible, that he set to immediately and damned all the Cinhalese collectively for the crime of one (and he a Moorman, probably—almost all the jewel-dealers are) in the notorious hymn which admits that every prospect pleases, "but man alone is vile." A very unbishoply frame of mind—first of all, to go and buy such vain gauds; and secondly, to be so angry about not getting genuine ones. However, perhaps it will always be better not to try and buy jewels in Ceylon that don't grow there.

Of course, the Cinhalese specialities nowadays, after sapphire, are pearls and cat's-eyes. Now, the price of pearls in Ceylon is, if you like, exorbitant. For £16 you may, with luck, buy a pearl in Colombo that you would give £6 for in London. The fact is that all the fine pearls found

off these coasts go immediately to India, where the native rulers have for them an almost fanatical fancy. The rest depart to America or London. Only remain third-raters, on which the Ceylon dealer tries to make an extravagant profit out of the tourist; and this, on the whole, is the rule of the island. It is a mistake to go out there for bargains in first-quality stones; such are shipped off home immediately, with the exception of the biggest sapphires that are kept very largely as decoys. Yet Ceylon, native country of gems, is the best place to buy abundance of beautiful stones, brilliant, sparkling, but of secondary quality. These it is not worth the dealer's while to send away, and these, in multitudes uncounted, are to be fairly bought here for prices that average, perhaps, threepence a stone.

Another dear Cinhalese gem is the cat's-eye—special speciality of the jewellers in Colombo, where almost every Moorman dealer claims to possess the largest specimen in the world. And out it comes from tiny jewelled gold box or rag of leather, a fat round pudding of a pebble, of a silky pea-soup colour, with the eponymous feline ray of glare down the centre. Indian princes highly prize these portents, and Cinhalese gem-merchants ask terrifying prices for them; but, truth to tell, the cat's-eye, luminous, obscurely beautiful and terrible, does not stand anywhere near the front rank of jewels. In the first place, it can never be made to harmonize with our system of setting, for it requires other stones to enhance it; and yet it is one of the primary laws that round-cut stones must never, never be set with facetted ones. The neighbourhood of sharp, crystallic surfaces confers a strange stodgy dowdiness upon the curves and rotundities of cat's-eye or cabochon. Consequently, the cat's-eye in our necklaces and pendants always looks unsatisfactory, inadequate, misplaced.

Escaping at last, exhausted, from the sparkling company of precious ones, we emerge once more into the red glare of Colombo. Rickshaws are eagerly plying, and we must have one to carry us quickly out of the town's hot ugly jostle to the Galle Face. But the Cinhalese rickshaw coolie is a very different person from the kurumaya, although his rickshaw be brought bodily from Japan. The Cinhalese is a frail, weedy creature, who jumps and jerks with an air of immense effort, and yet never seems getting along at all. Sitting behind him, as he strains and agonizes over his task, one feels for the first time the indignity to which one is subjecting a fellow-creature. It is impossible, sit how one will, to be comfortable in a Cinhalese rickshaw, or to believe that its puller is being made comfortable by one's attitude.

And all this is so unnecessary. As a matter of fact—and I speak from experience—rickshaw-pulling is the easiest and most automatic of tasks; for the properly-hung rickshaw, if properly held, runs almost of itself, a mere feather-weight pursuing gladly on one's heels as one runs, and only developing into a burden when you lug a stout old lady up a long hill. And that this is so you realize when you compare the jerky miseries of the Cinhalese coolie with the way in which your Japanese kurumaya will grip you the shafts at exactly the right point for the vehicle's poise, and then whirl smoothly away in long, effortless, happy strides that never tire nor worry you with a sense of strain. The Cinhalese has no notion of this. He pulls all wrong—at a wrong angle, in a wrong attitude, with over-exertion of the wrong muscles. Rickshaw-pulling is not a toil, but an art, a matter of pure knack and balance. The Cinhalese cannot understand this, and his rickshaw means, not only toil, but wretchedness.

And so through the breathless calm heat of early morn-

ing are you painfully tugged along the streets, and past a stolid lighthouse with a clock that never seems to go—unless its arrested hands point to the fact that this is the land where it is always afternoon; and then, all at once, you have left Colombo behind. You emerge upon the shore of the sea, stretching boundless away beyond a queer little public building by the side of the road, which for some reason has been built on the model of a Greek temple; and yet, of cheap stucco as the thing is, of cheap design, and quite absurd—yet, in the virginal freshness of the morning, with that deifying stretch of sea behind, all opal and azure, the yellow stucco becomes transfigured into rare gold marbles, and you are looking out upon the very Ægean from the shrine of the Wingless Victory. And then the curving road swings round on the sea-front, and yet another beauty lies before you. Still the air is steamy and heavy with the dews of night rising up in mist to the eye of day. Very far off through the glamour looms in faint blue the long bulk, the Chinese gables of the Galle Face Hotel, embowered in the mop-like ghostliness of cocoa-nut palms, wavering and top-heavy. The roadway slopes across the picture at an angle, and the triangle to your right is the pale, shimmering azure of the sea; the other, on your left, is a vast smooth tract of fine lawn, beaten track of military manœuvres by day, but now, crystal-clear and dewy from the dawn, the dancing-ground of the fairies and shore-spirits. The road, too, is of a hot, bright red, and flanked on one side by a Rotten Row of deep chocolate, on the other by the pale gold and amber of the sea-sands. So, from emerald green, through bright brown, bright red, bright gold, to infinite soft azures, you have so many strips of pure colour, clean and startling and refulgent in that untainted tropical morning. And then the journey ends, and you find yourself driving

up the entrance to the Galle Face Hotel, which you had thought was still at least a mile away; and the Galle Face is not that towering Chinese palace it had seemed, but a mere big hotel, spacious and goodly and plain.

Colombo, to the tourist, means, not so much the sweltering town, as the Galle Face Hotel, in whose long, cool corridors and open arcades you may sit and chaffer at your will for worthlessnesses, Japanese, Turkish, African; or watch tame cobras undulating to their master's music; or, if energy fails you to go shopping in the streets, haggle for jewels and kimono and wares of ivory from the merchants who have established their glass-fronted shops in the very galleries of the hotel itself. Colombo, to the resident, again, is not so much the town where he sweats and earns, as the scattered parks and pleasances all round, in which he has his bungalows. But to the resident and tourist alike the Galle Face is the centre and hub of the universe. Here, in the course of time and travel, comes sooner or later every man ever born of woman; every woman, interesting or uninteresting to man. Go where you will —go east, go west—and you shall hardly avoid landing up some day at the Galle Face—no, not even if your aim be the Antarctic Pole or Lhasa the Holy. The Galle Face is unescapable. Here comes the tourist in his millions; queens and daughters of kings make it their stopping-place; the official world holds revel in its halls, and planters on a holiday imbibe refreshment at its bars; all alike, resident and tripper, make the Galle Face their prime goal in Ceylon. And thus these mighty caravanserais of the East have a peculiar character quite beyond reach of an ordinary Western hotel, no matter how palatial.

For they have a very definite existence of their own: they are not mere shelters for the passer-by, mere conveniences without further significance; they are homes of activity,

centres of a national life, and—even more important—of national enjoyment. For, in these far countries, bereft of such solaces as Empire or Alhambra, the mind of the exile makes shift with such compendious happinesses as the Galle Face, and looks forward, through a hard, lonely month or year, to the happy time when he may be enjoying himself in its cool galleries, and taking rich meals to the blaring accompaniment of its band.

And then, the nights of the Galle Face! You go out into a courtyard at the back, shut in on three sides by the towering red bulk of the hotel, and on the fourth by the illimitable sea. And here, while the waves lap faintly on the shore, the winds make ghostly rustling in the group of tall cocoa-nut palms that hold the centre of the stage. And you pitch your wicker chair on the low terrace before them, and drink your drink, and smoke your smoke, and talk your pent-up talk, and in the intervals try to count the glaring globes of electric light that have been ingenuously fitted into the crowns of the palms—glowing fruits that depend amid the disgusted fronds, and mock the unassertive eternity of the stars above. And the band plays the whole time, rejoicing the soul of a musical nation, and all that love a noise better than the sacred silence of night.

Modern, indeed, is all this, civilized and refined to a notable degree. All the resources of modern culture are thick about you, and you feel that the world was only born yesterday, so far as right-thinking people are concerned. And Ceylon exists only since the establishment of our Raj; and even so, mainly as a pleasant, hilarious stopping-place in one's journeying east or west. In the big hall of the hotel one sits, watching the women that descend the great stairways, curled, elegant, perfected—artificial with the armour-plated artificiality of our own day, self-conscious in all their seeming unconsciousness.

You see it in every line of their figures, in the firm deliberation of their chin-strap muscle, in the neat, decorous lowering of their eyes, in the bland unconsciousness with which they always take the precise middle of the stairway, and descend with careful carelessness in the full glare of publicity. They incarnate their showy surroundings.

This is what is. One finds it hard to realize that there ever was anything else; that behind this high, magnificent mushroom of an hotel, behind these emanations of beautiful luxury, there lies a dim old kingdom of bygone sanctities and glories, there stand the unfading ghosts of dead loves and hates and agonies. The Galle Face is so perfectly, so gorgeously, modern that it annihilates the past; and so one retires at last to one's room, sated of bustle and display, to sleep heavily through the airless, lurid night until the first freshness of dawn betrays one into slumber. And then, in a little, the strengthening light of new-born day arouses us, and, incapable of further sleep, one throws the window wide, and looks out across the world, still dark against the glowing sky. For all the East is a flood of fire, and against its radiance stands black and serrated the uttermost rim of cocoa-palms that mark the limit of this flat land. And there, very far away, in the motionless, pure air, stands up into the flaming silence a great jag of darkness. It is the Peak, holy place of the world's three religions. It is the sacred mountain where Our Lord Buddha left his foot-print. And now, suddenly, we understand that the present is all a delusion. We are in old Lanka; in dead Lanka.

CHAPTER II

INITIATION

It is difficult, indeed, in Colombo, to understand that one is already standing on sacred soil—that this island is the seat of the oldest and most tremendous theocracy that has ever ruled a race. Jerusalem, Rome, and even Lhasa, are trifling hamlets compared with what Anuradhapura must have been in the days of its glories: Popes, elders, Cardinals, and chief-priests no more than small parsons, when their powers are compared with those of the mighty abbots who once held all Lanka and its Kings at their mercy; so heavy was the despotism, so universal was the sway exercised by these servants of the Most Holy and Humble. Though in Burma and Siam the Blessed Way is still purer and made more effectual in all eyes by general happiness and ease of life; though the countless sects of Japan preserve in greater dignity and splendour the cult of the Church, yet it is with Lanka that the later history of the Buddha's faith is most closely concerned. For Lanka, at the bidding of Indian Asoka, took refuge in the Buddha with a unanimous enthusiasm that has never really flagged from that day, more than two thousand years ago, down to our own corrupted times.

For more than two thousand years the history of Lanka is the history of the great abbeys and their heads. The strongest Kings were unable to make any headway against the weight of the Church, universal, militant,

triumphant; the long chronicle of heresies, endowments, reformations fills the pages of the Mahâvansa. And, in days remoter even than those, the historians of Ceylon take pleasure in recounting prowesses both mystical and mythical. On the platform of Ruanwéli Dâgaba have stood in their time, they say, the four Supreme Buddhas of this present age of ours; here have lighted Dipânkara, Kakusandha, Kasyapa, and Gautama; here, in the far-off, dim fulfilment of fate, shall one day stand the Comforter, Maitreya Buddha, whose coming heralds the dissolution of the world. No fewer than three visits do the historians of Lanka claim to have been made by the Buddha Gautama Himself. To Kelani He came; through the air He passed away, leaving His footprints in the rocky Peak; and yet again to the sacred city of Anuradhapura, and the platform of what was in later days to be Ruanwéli Dâgaba. More than all this, the very opening of Lanka's story is made to synchronize with the most august event in the world's history.

For the Cinhalese lordship of Lanka arose in this way: Vijaya was son of an Indian King far up in Vanga, which is probably Bengal. And he was of so turbulent and fierce a nature that he oppressed his father's people and grew universally hated, until the chiefs came to the King and begged him that his son might righteously be put to death. But this the King would not do; instead, he set Vijaya, with all his friends and followers, upon a ship, and turned them adrift from the land, to go into perpetual exile whither they would. And their wives and children he put on another ship and likewise turned adrift. And the wives and children sailed away into the immensities, and were no more heard of. But the ship that carried Vijaya was driven to the shores of Lanka; and there he disembarked, he and his little force, to find an island

of wonderful fertility and beauty all a-riot with jungle, and tenanted only by the uncouth jungle-folk. However, by magical fates, he became acquainted with the Princess Kuvéni, Lady of the jungle-folk; had her in marriage, and soon after became master in Lanka over all the aboriginal Yakkhas of the forest.

This is the history of the first conquest of Ceylon that history knows, and clearly truth is shrined in the tale, which goes on to tell how ungratefully Vijaya put away the Yakkha Princess as soon as she had served her turn of conciliating her wild people to the new sway; and, to secure himself sound and assuring alliances in India, married the daughter of a powerful King there; while one of his successors even took for Queen a Princess of the House of Sakhya, who was therefore of the same blood as the Buddha Gautama. But pious historians are not contented with this august relationship. They tell, further, that Vijaya's advent in Lanka had a deep and tremendous auspiciousness, for, in the hour when he was setting foot upon the Island of Saints, the wide air was darkened over the world, and earth and heaven were shaken with mighty thunderings, and the cry of superhuman voices that wailed and made lamentation through the gloom. For beneath the Sal-trees of Kusinara lay extended that day the tired, worn body of Siddharttha Sakhyamûni, while the soul of the Nirmankaya Buddha Gautama was soaring up, through trance on trance, to its final absorption in the perfect glory of Nirvana. Thus, from the earliest beginning, was Cinhalese Lanka involved in holy history, its very inauguration day being made to coincide with the Ultimate Passing of the Perfect Being. Alas, though, that this chronology is but a devout myth and symbol, necessitating the violation of truth! For, in actual fact, the Maha-parinibban—the Great Entrance into Nirvana—took place

about the year 543 B.C., whereas the landing of Vijaya cannot have been accomplished much before 477.

Be this as it may, there is no unfitness in making the opening of Lanka's history synchronous with the final release of Our Lord Buddha. So closely, and so faithfully in the main, has Lanka followed the faith of Him whose Parinibban-day it has chosen to commemorate as the beginning of its story. Even round and near Colombo itself crowd innumerable temples and shrines. Ten miles outside lies Kelani, sacred precinct honoured in legend by the visible bodily presence of the Buddha. Here bloom the big rosy lotuses of holiness; and here, too, have blossomed the roseate flowers of imagination. For, in all the length of His days, there is no sound reason for believing that the Most Perfect One ever visited Lanka. Indeed, it is plain that He never can have, or how could Vijaya, almost His contemporary, have found the island a demon-haunted jungle? Pious chroniclers have here, in their ambition to claim the actual presence of the Master, allowed zeal to triumph over prudence. Of two alternatives, it is infinitely the more probable—and, from a priestly point of view, more desirable—that the Buddha should never have visited Lanka, than that He should have come and gone without leaving a trace of His influence. Indeed, this latter alternative is altogether inconceivable, especially if the landing of Vijaya is to coincide with the Great Entrance into Nirvana.

But to those who value religious emotionalism, and look on it as a substitute for the religious spirit, it is never a wise thing to watch even the highest of faiths in a land where it has become the State religion. For a religion is a holy, private thing, the indwelling, animating heart of a man's own life and action; formalize it, make it manifest, try to fix it in words, and the secret, sacred spirit evapo-

rates, leaving only the outward form; and that which has been arranged to suit the crowd no longer suits the soul of each individual in the crowd. And not only does the intimate holiness of our own most private aspirations become profaned, vulgarized, and spoiled by the brutalizing of it in the hackneyed patter of priests (so that our hearts close hastily, like some lovely flower of the sea, against such impertinent intrusion), but also we run thereby the risk of substituting religiosity for religion.

For since, in public service and ceremony, a man feels his decency outraged and his feelings intruded on, he must yet, if he is to continue faithful, contrive to extract *some* psychological thrill from the performance. And this, now that his own emotions are locked away in a safe, can only be obtained by the importation of gorgeousness and pomp into the cult; and then, stirred and excited by mysteries and magnificence, a man allows himself or compels himself to be persuaded that the excitement arises from pure zeal and religion, whereas, in truth, it is simply more or less of a merely sentimental and sensual stimulus that he feels. And so, by degrees, the real sacred feelings, locked away, are forgotten, and the key is lost, and the man remains content with an artificial religiosity which substitutes emotion for conviction: and asks only of his cult that it should be decorative, appealing, thrilling—not any longer that it should be logical, practicable, convincing —not a cult, indeed, but the gospel of life and way of perfection. Soaked and sodden in ceremonial, his soul at last comes to look on religion as an end in itself: not, simply and solely, as the more or less important and misguided means towards an all-important end.

So, amid the stupendous baroque bedizenments of St. Peter's, in the dim, scented aisles of Notre Dame, we feel the call of expensiveness and mystery. We are in no way

convinced or enlightened; we are appalled or seduced into a wholly sensual prostration of spirit, which we waywardly mistake for genuine exaltation. Round our heart-strings plays the call of music, and its brief drunkenness is confused by our minds with the eternal stimulation of the waters of life. We feel good; we aren't in the least good, nor ever likely so to be. Most treacherous indeed of all emotional lures is this of music, on which it is the fashion of our day to drug itself frantic, under the illusion that it is cultivating pure holiness; for as absinthe is to other drugs, so is music to other mental debaucheries, demolishing the fibre of the soul, substituting ecstasy for happiness, and intoxication's rapture for the sane contemplation of loveliness. This and all other delights, absinthe and all other drinks, may be harmless enough if taken moderately and in due recognition of their real uselessness; but when they are allowed to usurp the place of reason, indulged to the point of a craze, then steps in the onlooker and pleads for temperance, if not teetotalism of soul, as no less vital for the soul's health than is temperance of body for the health of body and soul alike. And the plain fact is that we moderns are not to be trusted with these drugs. By indulgence we have given them too strong a hold over us, and our foundations are undermined. In old rough days we took them as hearteners by the way, and found them good; now we have put ourselves on a steady diet of liqueurs, physical and moral, ecstatizing and stupefying ourselves incessantly with the misused stimulants of the soul, until the opera-house becomes our drink-shop, our *assommoir;* and the Ring or Tristan our pet, prolonged debauch, from which at last, dishevelled, draggled, Bacchic, we trail ourselves exhausted forth, prostrate in the ashen weakness that follows on such an orgy of intoxication.

But in Ceylon of to-day there is none of this. The pious need fear no distraction, no seduction, by beauty; he may be very sure that any emotion he may feel in even the oldest shrines is born only of his own soul, of his own unassisted, unadulterated zeal; for to squalor and dirt the Cinhalese temples add a sense of the ugly that is almost miraculous. In glaring, gaudy colours you will see everywhere the most hideous pictures—crude illustrations of the birth-stories of Our Lord, or the daughters of Mara clad in sailor hats and the fashions of 1894, most unseductively tempting the followers of the Buddha, whose resistance, in such circumstances, is neither to be wondered at nor counted to their credit. Then, in the central shrine, there will be innumerable tawdrinesses and horrors of tinsel—big gilt statues jostling with marble ones, unrealities, shams, ugliness, and huddle.

In front, on a fishmonger's slab of marble, lie, though, the one redeeming feature of these altars—the piled, heaped flowers that the devout perpetually offer to the Holy Ones. For ever new, for ever sweet, are these treasures meetly offered—scarlet tassels of Hibiscus, or the creamy, fragrant wealth of the temple-flower. And the perfect Buddha receives these offerings with pleasure. Why He loves them he tells us in the "Anguttara Nikaya": "Because I approve such offerings, for which numerous kinds of animals are not destroyed. And why? Because such an inoffensive offering is fitting for the Holy Ones, and for those who tread the path of the Holy Ones." Not, of course, that flower or psalm can touch the Lord Gautama, absorbed eternally now in the Great Light; but the glad, willing offering is of profit to the soul that brings it. And perhaps the flower obtains exaltation in being offered, being of so low a grade of soul-consciousness that it cannot grudge martyrdom, as might an animal,

thus bringing darkness and discredit not only on itself that goes unwillingly to the slaughter, but also on those who lead it violently thither, and on the cause for which it is robbed of life. For in no cause, however holy, can such robbery or any robbery be lawful, nor any grudged service, nor any uncheerful sacrifice. For all this is theft, and brings shame on the cult for which it is made.

Buddhism, it has been said, is not a religion, but a philosophy. And this has been said as a damaging criticism, instead of as the highest praise that can ever be paid to a religion, even to such a religion as this—not a creed, but a knowledge ; not a doubt, but a certainty ; not a wail of hysteria, but a passionate, firm-founded, indestructible optimism. Apparently the prevailing notion of what a religion should be is some vague ecstasy, some irresponsible riot of emotion. But a religion must be, to justify itself, not this at all, but a sound and satisfying logical system—logical, that is to say, in as far as it does not abhor from reason or sense of right. It has to be a man's law of life: it has to be a man's hope in death ; and it cannot be either unless it be solidly founded, convincing, coherent, definite. If the hereafter cannot be proved, all the more is it necessary that any notions of it that are to balance and anchor our lives in this sea of transience must be clear, probable, reasonable—not windy visions, but solid, working hypotheses. Let us, in a religion, have emotion, too—by all means, agonies and swoonings of emotion, if necessary. But let reason and sound sense be our foundation if ever we are to turn those emotions to profit. Allied with reason, they will exalt us to the highest heavens ; devoid of reason, they are mere vagrant balloons of emptiness, soaring up with us to burst in the great inane.

Nor will anyone who has ever studied that stupendous

last life of the Buddha Gautama ever complain again that this profoundly philosophic creed—this creed which bases its claim not on miracles and emotion, but on probability and logic; which is, as Our Lord Himself declared, the religion of "Look-see," in which no convert was wanted or welcomed unless he came from deep logical conviction—that this creed lacks in its emotional appeal. If steady contemplation of the absolute perfection be not a fruitful source of profitable emotion, then, indeed, our souls are dry dead brushwood, and all the holy lives of all the blessed ones have been lived in vain, so far as our education by example is concerned. And, contemplating the last supreme Nirmankaya Buddha in his works and ways—Siddharttha the Prince; Sakhyamuni the ascetic; Buddha made perfect, and yet renouncing his reward and his release for the sake of our salvation; Buddha toiling still on earth for the truth; Buddha, at the end, passing away into the glory he had denied himself thirty years before, still, as ever, with only the thought of mankind and his followers in his heart—always, in every detail of that long, clear life, we can see nothing but perfection: a perfection so flawless, profound, and absolute that, in the contemplation, time and space and all the worlds are dwarfed to nothing, our poor souls shrivelled to a speck—and then, in an instant, by that example and that spectacle, exalted immeasurably, made masters of eternity, raised to the stature of the Utterly Perfect One Himself. For where He is gone, and by that way, all things visible, animate and inanimate, must ultimately follow and attain.

And this is the reason why all followers of the Lord Buddha regard all forms of life as so sacrosanct. For all forms of life are one; there is no essential difference between the life of a rock and the life of a man—no real difference in kind, though an incalculably vast difference

in degree ; yet it is the same spirit that possesses both. And all creation, from man down to the lowest animalcule and grain of dust, is moving steadily, if slowly, upwards on a vast ascending spiral, through universe after universe, through creation after creation, through dissolution after dissolution, far up the immeasurable heights of eternity, until, at the last, all things that are shall enter finally into the perfect radiance of pure Buddha. . . . "So rōku mōku do shitsu kai Jo-Butsu," says the Japanese proverb —"All trees and grass, these shall also become Lord Buddha."

And with such an august, inevitable destiny it is inevitably plain that every treader of the Way must have regard for every other treader of the Way, no matter how humble. This, and not primarily any crude notion of "transmigration," is the reason why the Disciple so faithfully respects other lives. They are the same as his, to a greater or a lesser degree ; nay, inasmuch as he and they are alike potential Buddha, they *are* he. And any careless cruelty, any unmeasured stroke of hand or foot, any indulgence in what the West calls sport, is not only a thing damaging to the soul that commits it, but also a hindering, a maiming of some gentle little pilgrim on the Way. For never must one lose the acute consciousness that worm on one's path, bird in one's wood—these are all our soul-brothers and sisters, all twin lives of our own, fellow-followers with us of the Happy Salvation, although they may as yet be very far down behind us on the Road. Doubled the reason, then, that we should never, by bringing misery, anger, terror into those small existences, be darkening those simple souls, and befogging them on the long road they are setting out to tread. That we are so greatly ahead of them on our journey is only another high responsibility laid upon us ; we can so easily make their

pilgrimage unhappy and difficult; we can so easily refrain from introducing distracting, ugly obstacles to their progress. Wrong done in pure accident, of course, can bring no harm, either to doer or to sufferer; for it is intention alone that lends its colour to a deed; but for the crimes of haste and thoughtlessness the law of the Buddha has no acquittal, for under that law no follower is supposed to act without thought for others—not in the smallest, humblest details of life.

Thought for others, thought for others, there is always the centre and nucleus of Our Lord's teaching—no barren, cold perfecting of self, but an everlasting recognition of the fact that if a man lose his soul he shall find it; that only through glad and absolute self-abnegation can the soul ever come to self-realization. For all souls are part of that one universal Soul, and only by abandoning the illusion of a little unchanging self of our own, apart eternally from all others, can we hope to attain that happy mersion of ourselves in the Soul Universal, attain to that identification of our life with all other lives, of our joys, hopes, miseries, and fears, with all the other phantasmal joys, miseries, hopes, and fears of all the world and all the worlds, which in the far-off end of our journey shall prove to be the Supreme Incomprehensible Peace. We are not the individual unhappy thing we call "I"; we are everything. And until, through effective, glad denial of the "I," we grasp the consciousness of our tremendous capacity and destiny, we shall never set our feet on the Way of the Great Release.

For further questionings, for probings into the remote unprovable, the Buddha has little encouragement. His religion is concerned only with the right and beatific living of our lives towards their glorious good end. Such questions as the personality of God or the Supreme Cause

do not come into the question at all. There is, of course, for the clear diamond-thought of the Buddha, piercing time and eternity, no mechanical personal Cutter of Knots, no artificial, partial mechanism for the undoing of sins by request. All sin, small and great, has its inevitable result. No result, great or small, can ever be escaped; each sin, weakness, craving, must be paid for to the uttermost farthing, out of our soul's own pocket, by the natural inevitable course of time and things. Encourage, say, your own greediness or vice; automatically these will increase upon you, and you be left at your next death to go on into your next manifestation with the augmented burden of these lusts, and of all their concomitant agonies and disappointments, heavy upon you. And of these it is you that must ultimately purge yourself; and yourself alone it is that *can* purge yourself, by right resolution; and since time has no existence, you have room, in the revolution of eternity, to shorten the period of your purgation, or to extend it through many millions of manifestations. And the inducement for shortening it is simply the hope of getting soon away from the incessant disillusionments, satieties, and sorrows that attend on sensuous pleasure, as surely as the wheel follows the tread of the ox that pulls the cart. There is no other reason; one's emancipation is a matter of personal choice. The one thing certain is that only when all consequences of your sin are counteracted and cancelled can you advance upon the way of happiness, and that sooner or later, even in the worst career—the most cruel, the most desirous—there must come the turning-point when it begins, through very weariness of suffering, to turn away from suffering, and rise again towards the Buddhahood which nothing in the universe can avoid.

And far away beyond all this, apart, irrelevant, is the

question of God, or the Supreme Cause. Incurably anthropomorphic that we are, nothing can cure us of conceiving a personal God in the form of an enormously magnified old man, fully supplied (in defiance of the Thirty-nine Articles) with body, parts, and passions, to be secured as an ally by praise and prayer—partial, deprecable, and human as any elderly gentleman whom flatteries can wheedle. This, of course, whatever may be or not be, is an absurdity, springing from our vain and imperfect imaginations. The Buddha declares that the whole question, the analysis of the unanalyzable, the conception of the inconceivable, is no business of ours, and can only detain us on our Way by endless unprofitable speculations. To one who went to Him asking release from sorrow, and admission to the Road, but first demanding satisfaction on such vast problems, Our Lord returned a deliberately rebuffing answer, declaring that these things were beside the point, and were as if a sick man should go to a doctor to be healed of grievous pains, and yet refuse to be treated until he was satisfied as to whether the doctor's carriage had white horses, or some other such frivolous inquiry that had no sort of bearing on his sickness or the doctor's ability to cure it.

The existence, then, of a Supreme Being, the Buddha neither affirms nor denies. The problem and its solution cannot effect our lives, our ambition to tread the Way, our failure or success in doing so. And as to the personality of an omniscient, pervasive God, the answer to that riddle is hinted subtly enough in the parable of Brahma and the Old Monk.

"Now, there was once an Old Monk who conceived a strong desire to know at what point the four elements of fire, earth, air, and water came to an end and ceased utterly. So he went to the gods of the Four Great Kings

and asked them his question; and they replied that they did not know, but that doubtless their superiors, the Four Great Kings, would be able to satisfy his doubts. So the Old Monk went on to the Four Great Kings and asked them where the elements came utterly to an end. But they, too, were unable to answer him, and sent him on to yet another higher power; and there, again, he failed of his reply, and so continued in his search, for ever meeting with ignorance in heavenly body after heavenly body, and for ever being referred for answer to a spirit yet more wise and august, who in his turn would prove unable to solve the riddle. And so at last the Old Monk came into the very presence of the high gods who wait upon Brahma. Neither were they able to answer him. However, they offered him hope and said: 'We cannot tell you this, O Monk, but there is now Brahma, Great Brahma, the Supreme Being, Unsurpassed, Omniscient, Universal Lord; Creator, Fashioner and Master; the Conqueror, the Ruler and the Father of all things past, present, and to come. Go, then, to Him, for He is most excellent of all, and will without doubt be able to settle your doubts.'

"'Thank you,' said the Old Monk; 'and where is Great Brahma at the present moment?'

"'We do not know,' they replied, 'where Great Brahma is, nor in what direction Great Brahma is, nor his whereabouts at all. However, where there is a radiance and a refulgence, there will Great Brahma be found.'"

Their direction was, perhaps, rather vague, but fortunately at this point Great Brahma appeared in His full glory, Master of the Universe, enthroned in unspeakable majesty above the stars, with innumerable legions of angels and archangels around. (And for Brahma read, as you will, Jehovah, Allah, God the Father.)

"Then the Old Monk drew near and asked Him, saying: 'Tell me, Great Brahma, where do the four elements cease utterly and come to an end?'

"And Great Brahma, from his starry throne, replied and said: 'I, O Monk, am Brahma, Great Brahma, the Supreme Being, Unsurpassed, Omniscient; Universal Lord, Creator, Fashioner and Master; the Conqueror and the Ruler and the Father of all things past, present, and to be.'

"And the Old Monk answered Him, saying: 'Sir, I am not asking you whether you are Brahma, Great Brahma, the Supreme Being, Unsurpassed, Omniscient; Universal Lord, Creator, Fashioner and Master; Conqueror and Ruler and Father of all things past, present, and to be. I am asking you where the four elements cease utterly and come to an end.'

"And Brahma replied unto him with authority: 'I am Brahma, O Monk, Great Brahma, the Supreme Being, Unsurpassed, Omniscient; Universal Lord, Creator, Fashioner and Master; Conqueror and Ruler and Father of all things past, present, and to be.'

"'I have no desire,' answered the Old Monk, 'to learn who you may be, sir, nor to hear of all your attributes. I desire only to know where the four elements cease utterly and come to an end.'

"Then Great Brahma arose from his starry throne and descended through the countless ranks of angels and archangels, saints, and lesser gods. To the Old Monk he came down, and took him by the arm, and led him apart from the heavenly host.

"And then Great Brahma answered the Old Monk, saying: 'All these angels and archangels of mine imagine that I, Great Brahma, know everything, and that is why I was reluctant to answer your question in their presence;

for I, O Monk, have no notion where the four elements cease utterly and come to an end. Therefore was it wrong of you, O Monk, to leave the Buddha, the Most Blessed One, and search elsewhere at such length for the answer to your question. Go back, O Monk, go back, and put your problem before the Buddha, the Utterly Perfect One, and, as he shall solve it, so believe.'"

CHAPTER III

ROUND COLOMBO

NOT long does the tourist linger in sweltering Colombo. Everybody comes to Colombo; nobody stays there—at least, if they can help it, for many poor slaves of the lamp there are who perforce live year in, year out in Colombo, filling the bungalows all through the parks and down the Mount Lavinia Road, and counting the days until they may be off to play at being in England amid the Grasmere-scenery of Newera Eliya—blessed mountain station, which you must call Nooraylia—where the lettuces are sometimes browned with a frost which their eaters hail with joy—dear reminder of far-off countries where the odiousnesses of climate are the rule, and not the rare delicious exception. But Nooraylia—one has to think of it by its English name—is so merely English that the wanderer in Ceylon avoids it fervently. One has not travelled several thousand miles simply in order to revel in the company of one's compatriots amid the landscape of the English lakes, enhanced by the sporting facilities of Wimbledon.

Nooraylia is not Ceylon, has nothing to do with Ceylon. It is simply a projection of that curious English spirit which, in countries no matter how celestially beautiful, is never satisfied until it has made itself some sort of close facsimile of an English country town, a place where you can race and play golf and dance, without being too much bothered by the consciousness that you are not in

England, where you may, for a happy fortnight, forget that you are prisoned in such a paradise as Ceylon. Now, for those chained for a term of years in Ceylon, it is abundantly necessary to have a safety-valve such as Nooraylia, where exile and bondage may be lost sight of for a time; but why the passing visitor should crowd to Nooraylia in his millions remains an unanswerable problem. There is nothing in the least Cinhalese—nothing in the least interesting—up at Nooraylia, except an occasional frost. If you simply want lovely English scenery, why not save your money and go to Grasmere instead? It couldn't rain more at Grasmere than it does at Nooraylia. If you simplywant English company, golf, and a race-course, why not restrict your peregrinations to Esher and Surbiton?

But quickly, anyhow, must one hasten away from Colombo. Heat compels most people. I, for my part, new to the country, revelled in the warmth, and never had too much of it; but others pant and suffer. The residents declare that the blood-corpuscles of a new-comer are plump and fat and frequent, capable of standing the temperature without strain; but that, as years go by, they become anæmic, sere, and withered, losing all power of resistance to the heat. Be this as it may, there is no temptation for anyone to linger in Colombo, unless he is anxious to curtail his visit to Ceylon abruptly by a premature bankruptcy in its jewel shops; there the sights of Colombo end. You may at pleasure drive round and visit gaudy, hideous Buddhist churches; you may, if devout, go and visit several equally hideous Christian ones. Grim and dank are they, built in uncompromising British styles. And the Buddhist churches are beset by impudent beggars, and no less impudent guides and acolytes, who demand a fee from you at every turn.

There is one lovely thing, however, in Colombo. The Kotahena Temple is, indeed, squalid and ugly as the others; but its present incumbent is a man of energy, and bent on doing many things. Among other points of interest, he has collected a museum—a strange congeries of things interesting and worthless. In dusty glass cases, in a little dusty room, you will be shown fragments of the Alms-bowl Relic of Our Lord, and a gnarled knop of wood from the most blessed of all trees, the *Ficus* of Buddha-Gaya, where the Perfect One attained Nirvana, and renounced it for the sake of the suffering world. Among other fragments they lie, these holy things, labelled with gummed tags of paper, like any rubbish in a school museum. Then there are pieces of casts, pieces of old stone-work, and one of the so-called magical mirrors of Japan, of which the custodian makes great case. It is really a rather tedious and ordinary thing, this magic mirror, especially as the Kotahena specimen has the look of being entirely modern. Japan has produced them freely, and even here—at home—I have a big one, though its magical revelation is not the same as that of Kotahena. At first sight it is a commonplace large disc of polished metal, with a back elaborately wrought; but hold it in the bright light, and through the opaque and heavy reverse there flashes suddenly, inexplicably, a glory of rays, in the midst of which appears in yet brighter glow some holy figure or symbol. Mine throws only a big sacred letter, that at Kotahena a figure of Buddha or Bodhisat—as far as I remember, K'annon Sama, who is Avalokitesvara in Avatar.

But in the second room one comes upon a marvel. This is a cast from a certain statue found in India, in the Swat Valley. Now, the Swat Valley and all the neighbourhood of Gandara and Peshawar is illustrious as being the closest meeting-point there has ever been between the

East and the West, for here the backwash of Alexander's brief conquering wave left established in permanent force a kingdom of Greeks—Hellenes in all their works and ways. The dynasty reigned on for several generations, and while Menander held the throne there came to him a wandering monk of our Lord Buddha. And the resulting dialogue is not only one of the holiest of canonical Scriptures, revered alike by North and South, but also is intensely interesting as showing the unmistakable Greek subtlety of the King's mind working against the philosophy of the East. The result, of course, was the conversion of the King and all his kingdom, and, without doubt, that Western wave of Buddhism which surrounded Alexandria with Buddhist monasteries, and established on the shores of the Dead Sea a colony of Buddhist ascetics.

But from the conversion of Menander, whom the Eastern Scriptures know as Milinda, there sprang a secondary result, in some ways more interesting to us than the first, now that Milinda and his kingdom and all his thoughts are numbered with the dust of ages. For Greek art—Hellenistic by that date, overripe, luxurious—set eagerly to work on all the details in the holy histories of Our Lord. And from this blend of East and West there sprang a hybrid art which unites the virginal stiffness of archaism with the sultry splendours of maturity. Of a deep attractiveness are the sculptures from Gandhara—pure Hellenic, pure Indian, married with a subtlety that results in complete charm. We read how the Venerable Teshoo Lama fell into ecstasy before the Hellenized Buddhas and Bodhisattas at Lahore, and for ourselves we can judge how exquisitely Indian voluptuousness of line, Greek restraint and purity, are made to harmonize, as we wander down the corridors of South Kensington among the cases of treasures from Gandhara. There, indeed, there is one

thing lovelier, perhaps, than all other stone works, except the finest productions of the late Archaic Age in Athens—lovelier, at least, in as far as magical charm and a haunting appeal impress our souls with the Divine awkwardness of archaism, when the sure and cold perfection of maturity may leave us in a stupor of admiration that admits no warmer or more personal feeling.

This is an almost life-size statue of Prince Siddharttha before he became the Lord Buddha. Jewelled and begirt, haloed with the aureole of his coming sacrosanctity, there looks out at us the face of the Predestined, clothed in a beauty that combines the calm Hellenic manliness with the minute elegance of the high-born Indian, Prince of the House of Sakhya. And from that combination emerges a rare and delicate splendour, rich with full Indian softness of line, yet stiff in the undefinable, sweet uncertainty of an art grappling adventurously with strange, unrealized mysteries of Hellenic craftsmanship. Slightly bent the figure stands, curving in a modified Indian convention; the right hand rises in blessing; the face, evenly, firmly balanced upon the columnar throat, faces the world humbly yet royally; and on the lips, shadowed by the fine down of youth, there curves that same exquisite smile, haunting, inscrutable, memorable long after mature Lysippos and Michael Angelo are forgotten—that faint, flickering witchery which you see in the archaic goddesses of the Akropolis, in the firm, full mouth of the Olympian Apollo, in the thin, cruel charm of Athena at Ægina. They may not fully have grasped their craft, those obscure, nameless artists who so decidedly cut those lips; but in their groping efforts they attained a radiant, elfin childishness of effect, far other, and far more elemental and divine, than the finished, awful majesty that Pheidias breathed into the Athena Promachos and the Athena

Parthenos—far other than that transcendental, glorified humanity which idealizes every lovely boy in the youths of Polykleitos.

The Kotahena cast is from a larger statue than the Gandhara Buddha. In its way—though more perfect, and therefore less appealing, as leaving less to the imagination—it is a most wonderful example of that Indo-Hellenic art. It represents Siddharttha Sakhyamuni in the last, fiercest hours of his asceticism, before he abandoned that fearful and fruitless path. Cross-legged sits the emaciated figure, carved almost to the full stature of its model; and it is mere skin and bone, appalling triumph of realism. The stomach is a deep hollow, legs and arms dry skeletons; the labouring ribs have much ado to sustain the skin so strained and stretched across them; and over all, pitilessly emphasized, course and ramify the distended veins. The neck is nothing now but a bundle of tendons and sinews; on it, poised bravely as ever, rises the indomitable face. That face is the face of a young man yet, racked by unutterable macerations. Deep-sunken in profound cavities are the staring eyes; the cheeks fall in from their bones; the ridge of the nose is sharp; and yet the austere beauty of the thing is triumphant. Nothing can spoil the perfect oval of the face, the treatment of the soft, curling beard, the yearning majesty of the expression. For Jesus or for Buddha, that countenance may fitly express the Buddhahood in either; unlabelled, you might fairly take it for an Oriental study of Jesus in the wilderness. It is half archaic, half mature; convention struggles with the most merciless veracity. And from the struggle is born the Divine Spirit, even as, perhaps, in all the walks of life, the Divine Spirit is always born from the conflict between law and the Higher Truth, between the established order and private conviction, between Kreon

and Antigone, between Bishop Cauchon and Joan the Maid.

In Kotahena there is also a shrine, with modern statues of the Buddha from Burma, and modern frescoes all round, depicting scenes from the Jatâka-mâla, or Foregoing Incarnation stories of the Buddha. Modelled in life-size, and coloured, Suddhōōdăna and Maya, parents of the Most Holy One, stand in the corner of the corridor; round the Naos sit aligned the Four-and-Twenty Perfect Buddhas that have come and gone. Sleeping in meditation on the verge of that final release which the uninstructed call His death lies the Supreme One Himself, last of that holy line; and, at His side, standing erect, is the figure of Him Who is to Come, our Lord Maitreya Buddha, the Comforter, whose advent heralds the dissolution of all things, before their next reconstitution in the never-ceasing cosmic whirl of disintegration and reformation.

Very far down the darkness of the ages shines, like a star, the approaching glory of Maitreya Buddha. In what form he now dwells, in what world, what wise soul is there that can tell? Perhaps the Bodhisatta is even among us now on earth, toiling ever upwards, conscious unconsciously of his supreme goal. Perhaps he is clothed in humble flesh: perhaps he dispenses happiness from a throne. But wherever he may be, whether King or peasant, bird or flower or beast of the wild wood, be sure that he steadily draws near, and that, sooner or later, the hour must dawn when the veils of earth shall all be torn away, and the time-dimmed gospel of happiness shall be revealed once more in all its majesty of unclouded truth.

And whereas, in the Buddhism of China and Japan, Maitreya Buddha—Miroku Buddha—holds but a sub-

ordinate position, the Buddhism of the South has even run at times to the absurd length of adoring the earthly relics of a Redeemer who has not yet appeared, much less departed. From this, indeed, arose lamentable and tremendous schisms, a decay of sympathy between brethren, and the ultimate extinction of the religion in the very land that gave it birth. Northern Buddhism also reveres the Comer, and in Thibet, at least—though Ceylon is cold in the matter—they hold the interesting theory that the last dominant Buddha of the present Kalpa will attain his supreme revelation in a Western land, and take his ultimate flight into Nirvana from the midst of some European nation. He is never, in Thibet, given the cross-legged attitude of sitting, but always appears seated upon his throne in Occidental attitude. In Ceylon, so far as I have seen him, he stands, and near the figure of his predecessor.

And the coming of Maitreya Buddha heralds, I have said, the end of the world; not, of course, the final end, for the final end of all things is Nirvana. But as the turbulent atoms of the Cosmos form by attraction into huge wheeling globes of rock and metal, so even these are impermanent as a dream—crash and dissolve and whirl asunder into undiscoverable fragments; and then, after their cataclysm, slowly take shape again, and so revolve, until once more the law of their being overtakes them, and they darken, shatter, and disappear for a time. So, says legend, the appearance of Maitreya Buddha will be prelude to the dissolution of our earth—in after-ages to re-form once more and pursue the long upward path of salvation. Each period, rolling on into millions of years, between formation and destruction of a world, is called a Kalpa, and to each Kalpa, besides the countless millions of souls that attain the final bliss and enter in, there are

also Five Resplendent Ones — Nirmankaya Buddhas, perfected souls, lords of all wisdom, who might at will cease utterly and depart to their rest, but who choose rather, by an abnegation far above every other abnegation, to put off the hour of their release, and to stay on earth revealing truth, heartening the world by the revelation for another thousand generations, until the next Nirmankaya shall arise. Four already have come and passed since our world began—Dipánkara, Kakusandha, Kasyapa, of whom all tale is lost: and Gautama, with whose revelation the world is still refulgent. Yet one more remains—Maitreya —and after him the Kalpa closes in interplanetary crash and an indistinguishable cloud of flying star-dust, whirling in the dark void, until the atoms coalesce anew.

This is the tale of the coming of Maitreya Buddha, as I heard it from an old monk in Kotahena. I was seated in the cool inner room of the incumbent's house, and, beyond the eaves, the grateful eye looked out upon a dappled gloom of green, every plumy fern and trailing liane kindled to emerald here and there, and pierced in places by the sun's rays, that fell, slanting solid lances of light, on the flagged stones of the courtyard before that long low house. And there, as I waited for the incumbent, I conversed with the aged monk on the coming of Maitreya Buddha. I was seated on a horsehair arm-chair at a table clothed in a parti-coloured cloth; he was at some distance on a sofa of ruby velvet. Beyond him, above a crowded bookcase, a ballet-girl of tissue paper, with full crinkly skirts, sat coquettishly balancing on the horns of a cardboard new moon, fitted up with a waggish face. How so indecorous a decoration had come into precincts so learned and pious I am at a loss to guess. The contemplation distracted me as I cross-examined the monk. Between us stood the agile interpreter, clad in

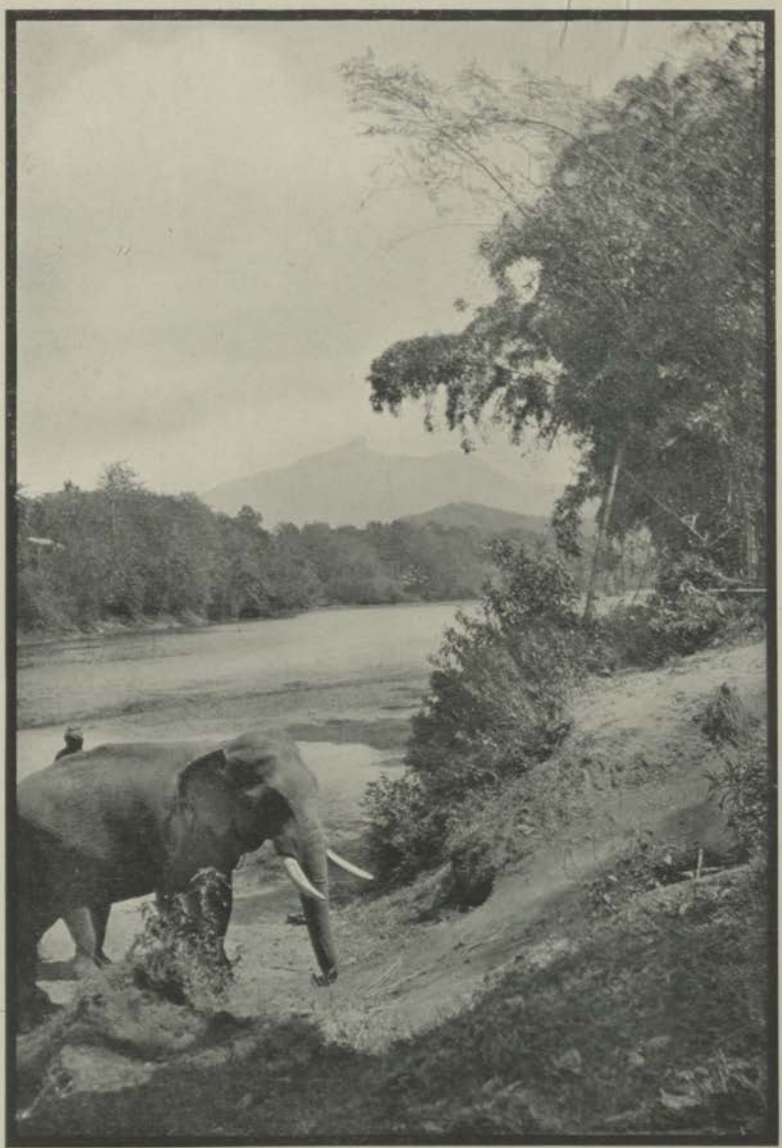
European clothes, voluble, and smiling with insinuation. Our dialogue proceeded high and disposedly, like the dancings of Queen Elizabeth, its intervals filled with the stifling stillness of a tropical afternoon. The monk was very old and frail, clad in the yellow robe; at intervals he spat resoundingly into a tall copper vase half filled with water.

And this is the tale he told of the Advent, translated into Anglo-Cinhalese by the interpreter, and by me paraphrased into English. At present, he said, we are verging towards the Lesser Destruction. For the life of man is now lengthening, and will continue so persistently to lengthen, that ere long the span of a moderate life will be some hundred and twenty years, while the average will be about a hundred and fifty. After this grand climacteric the span will diminish again, following the eternal law of flux and reflux, until at last the span of life has so dwindled that the most venerable greybeard will not reach to more than ten years or so, while the vast majority will die, like Mr. Gilbert's baby, enfeebled old dotards of five. This is the First Destruction. After that the scene will change as before, and life will draw out to its usual length, and then, beyond that, to a hundred years and a hundred and fifty, subsequently to shrink back again to its minutest compass. This is the Second Destruction. And, after this, with signs and wonders, arrives Our Lord Maitreya Buddha, to come and go amid great happiness and marvels, preparing all men for the end of this present Kalpa, and the dissolution of this world, as we know it, into other, scattered shapes, from which, after the fulfilment of æons, it shall come together, atom by atom and grain by grain, composing into new forms of life and different scenes for our energies, virtues, and vices. And what mighty Buddhas, in what other worlds of ours, shall arise in their

turn to guide and help, that lies hidden far down the unplumbable gulf of the years. But the coming of the Lord Maitreya is to announce the Great Dissolution of things as they are.

Of other wonders Kotahena holds many. The incumbent has started a prosperous school, and the precinct rejoices in a Maze, built of low, mortared walls, with glass-crusted copings. This is to symbolize the sad world of desire, so fatally easy to enter, so agonizingly hard to escape. After this we leave Kotahena, and drive out in our rickshaw down the bright red road, as soft as velvet, and so into the crowded, noisy streets of Colombo, beneath the plumage of many brilliant trees whose ardent green is of so fierce a tone that it almost brings the water to one's eyes. Everywhere there is life, thronged, riotous, and voluble. And yet about it all there is a certain indefinable quality—something unreal and ghostly.

So one drives off, perhaps, down the long level road to Mount Lavinia. The way is thick with natives, lithe, tall, and dark, hurrying cheerfully on innumerable businesses. Stark little babies wallow and babble in the dust —delicious little round things, inconscient as kittens, and no less attractive. Far on beneath overhanging cocoanut-palms goes the highway, threading a cool jungle of greenery. Bungalows of the well-to-do appear on either side—dachshunds among houses—immensely long-bodied, with no legs to speak of, mere enormous roofs, squattering on the ground, from which they rise on tiny pillars almost invisible beneath their projecting eaves. Every brilliant blossom crowds their gardens, and their protecting hedges are made of Hibiscus, drooping its blossoms everywhere, sheeny silken single roses of enormous size ; dainty tassels of pure vermilion with a long fluffy paint-brush stigma protruding. *Rosa-sinensis*, the single big Hibiscus,



"The Elephants bathing at Katugastoté."

stars its frail boughs like rare roses ; the Tassel hangs from a thread-like stem, and wavers gently in the hot air. Then come native shops and hovels—primitive affairs, open to the day, heaped with salt fish, grain, mysteries enveloped in green leaves. Chafferers linger, haggle, stay to chatter. Then comes by an old monk in yellow robe, his begging bowl making a bulge at his back, and after him his acolyte, carrying his necessaries. Tall Moormen, fan-bearded, swagger here and there ; darker blacks appear amid the light browns of the Cinhalese. Restless glad vivacity is the keynote of all the hurrying, hovering throng. And yet still there remains about the scene its curious impression of unreality.

Mount Lavinia lies some miles out from Colombo. At the last, having passed several entrances to Buddhist shrines, the road turns aside, down a soft avenue, and debouches on the sea. On a small hillock sits the famous hotel, gazing stolidly up and down the flat, monotonous coast, all a waving fringe of palms. Sea and sky have an indistinguishable beauty of blueness from here, and soft air hovers perpetually over the prominence. From the gallery one steps out on a turfed slope of fine tropical herbage that leads sheer down to the gently-lapping water. Here there is a dark tower containing an ill-smelling pond with some turtles that are shown you for a fee; subsequently, no doubt, to be turned into soup and replaced by more. Beyond, there is a minute bay of golden sand, and then begins the inexorable northern line of coast, stretching up to Colombo in an unbroken bank of cocoanut-palms. And on the other side of the hillock the same stern line wanders southwards towards uttermost Galle, and Mâtăra beyond that, and Dondra, furthest point of all, whence you look without a break over many thousand leagues of water to Australia.

And palm-trees everywhere—palm-trees, palm-trees, cruel, heart-breaking, lovely monotony of palm-trees. Terrible, from afar off, is the grey tyranny of the olive, that saddens all the seaward hills of Provence and Liguria; but sadder and more terrible yet is the emerald uniform despotism of the cocoanut-palm as you see it in the tropics. Gracious exceedingly is the individual tree—very tall, very slender, bowed this way and that, crowned with a coronet of grey-green fruits beneath that spreading volume of fronds, which makes so poor and mangy a thing of the date-palm when next you see it. For the date-palm seems a moth-eaten caricature of the cocoanut, so ample, so magnificent are the drooping, arching, spraying plumes of the latter. But in a mass of many miles this opulent plumage deadens and kills one's enthusiasm. The coast-line of Ceylon has a paralyzing effect, seen though it is against the matchless azures of the sea, under the matchless azures of the sky, and through that limpid, delicate air which softens the distances into a mirage of pale sapphire.

Beneath the shelter of Mount Lavinia lurks a Buddhist church, new, and newly painted in the most hideous daubs, whose greedy attendants lie in waiting for all new-come visitors, to allure them with smiles and pillage them without pity. Little need this ugly place detain any but the most unwary; we may tear ourselves away, and go bowling back through that humming crowd of life along the road. Driving round the parks of Colombo as one returns, there stands in our way a vast and pompous building, like an embassy, or the Japanese idea of a European palace. Contrary to all expectations, it is a museum. And here, amid its tall cool rooms, a-jostle with the relics of dead civilization, we understand at last the riddle of those streets and their ghostly suggestion.

For Lanka is dead — unutterably dead — and here, in the museum, we are rummaging its bones. What now exists is but a phantom — scurrying ghost of bygone activities. Lanka has ceased to exist; Ceylon has never existed.

There is a land, indeed, occupying the space and acreage of Lanka, and its people are numerous and happy. But all this is illusion; Lanka has passed away for ever. These thronging crowds are only vapours, evanescent, illusive. Entity has gone out of the land; the soul has taken flight. Henceforth there dwells here a cheerful, chattering vacancy, crushed in the bland and paralyzing beneficence of the British Raj; but there is no spirit of the country. Great dead Lanka has gone; in its place remains a mere convenience for the merchant, the tea-planter, the sailor.

I have seen dead Korea, stretching grimly away in all its grave-dotted desolation towards grim, desolate mountains, under a desolate, grim sky, eternally wailing with mournful gales. And there death is cold, shrill, pervasive, dreadful. But not even in Korea have I felt quite that sense of absolute death, that perfect extinction, which reigns over Lanka — the stillness of absolute annihilation. Most dead of all dead lands is Lanka—cheerful, bustling Lanka—Lanka the so long extinguished that over its grey dust innumerable activities of to-day can go busily at play and work without affecting, without changing, the immemorial, irrevocable corpse. Korea, cold and stark, is death in life: and Ceylon, voluptuous and luxuriant, is life in death, the pullulating life that can only riot and engender amid the corruption of the grave.

Here, in the museum, are bones of the dead ages—relics of the time when Lanka was Lady of the sea and

arbitress of East and West, a mighty land for the mighty ones to reckon with. Here is the huge stone lion, Assyrian in his convention, from the Council Hall of Polonnarua, carrying the name of Nissanka Malla the King, busiest of builders and restorers, whose short crowded reign coincides with that of our King John. Here are blurred colossal fragments, exquisite bronze figures from Anuradhapura ; and here, arrayed in cases, are piteous little heaps of morsels, dug and stolen from the rich Dâgabas. In all honour and reverence the Lady Sanghamitta, Princess and abbess, was carried to her rest, and pious hands collected gold and jewels to bury at the side of the saint who had attained Parinibban. But her ashes might not rest ; invaders from the mainland sacked the Sacred City many times, and dreadfully. At last it remained for the British Government to collect what was left, and there, in the museum, repose in piles the small rough cornelians, sapphires, beads, and crystals that are all the relics, now, of Sanghamitta the saint. And the same has been the fate of the other holy Dâgabas too. Here you will see little similar heaps and assorted trays of ruby, jacinth, glass, and jade, from Kiribat Vihara, from Abhayagiriya,* from sacred Thûparâma itself. And then, hard by, aligned in rows, are the coins. From Sigiri are these, as well as from Anuradhapura—Chinese, some of them, and the rest more familiar. For here, blurred by the red earth of the Lion Rock, lie in exile the effigies of their Imperial and Divine Eternities, Arcadius and Honorius, Emperors of the East and West ; here also great Theodosius their father, Constantine, Valentinian, and ill-starred Julian.

Few things are more pitiful, indeed, than to contem-

* Be bold with this : call it Abya-girya.

plate the pitiful tawdry remains of past greatness in the midst of a land that has clean forgotten it all—forgotten it, too, beyond chance of recovery; for old Lanka is severed by an impassable gulf from the bright, ephemeral generation that now swarms in Ceylon. Standing there in that glowing afternoon, in the high, haunted silence of the museum, one hears very clearly the wail of bygone years; feels insistent the call of a grandeur and a tragedy that lie so far back now in the past as almost to have slipped from the consciousness of the present. One forgets clamorous hot Colombo, the untiring energies of its modern rulers, all the alien, unsympathetic activities of to-day; one forgets Ceylon, and takes refuge in Lanka of high magnificent days, when its embassies went far over land and sea, when its Kings sat robed in ruby and sapphire, when many tens of thousands gathered at once to worship on the enormous platform of Ruanwéli or Jétavánarâma; when the Brazen Palace lifted nine flashing stories of gorgeousness, dazzling the eye of day; when Anuradhapura was the greatest of all the sacred cities that the world has ever seen, stretching this way and that in every direction for some sixteen miles—for sixteen miles that nowadays are all flat, indecipherable jungle, to set against the tiny cleared strip that has been made for the modern settlement and the five rediscovered Dâgabas. Piteous, indeed, is the thin faint trickle of life that keeps feebly pulsing this gigantic heart of bygone holinesses. Still, the Holy Tree has its faithful; ecstasy still clings round Thûparâma; but here, amid the scattered stuff of the museum, one takes refuge in the past as it must have been, and realizes by contrast the perfect extinction of the present.

And so at last we go out again into the glare, into the roaring streets and cool avenues of Colombo. But all this

is a phantom to us now, a ghost, a clamorous pretence. This is not Lanka. Lanka is dead; Lanka is gone beyond recall. For a land, no less than a person, may die; a land, no less than a person, may have his simulacral eidolon. And the Ceylon of to-day is the empty, soulless phantom of old Lanka, dead five centuries since, and almost forgotten.

CHAPTER IV

KANDY

SADDEST, though, of all dead places in dead Lanka is the last capital of the dying Cinhalese kingdom as it lies here very quiet under the shadow of high forested hills. For the history of the Cinhalese kingdom is the history of many disastrous migrations. In the oldest days of all, when the footprints of Gautama Buddha were yet fresh in the world, Vijaya the Conqueror and they that followed him in the lordship of Lanka had the unfortunate notion of establishing their capital away in the northern plains. And there, accordingly, inadequately protected, indefensibly situated, arose the great city of Anuradhapura, an enormous miracle of wealth and sanctity, spreading far over broad lands as flat as the palm of the hand, and so near the perilous northern coast, that any adventurer who chose to come marauding over from India for the week-end could sack the Sacred City and then retire immediately across the strait to his own land.

And sacked the Sacred City was, not once, but again and again; the chronicle of Lanka is one unending tale of Tamil invasions. Sometimes the pillagers came and went like Attila, sometimes they stayed and usurped for a generation or two the lordship of the island; but always, like a sword of Damokles, hung the terror of pillage over the capital in the plain. And then, by degrees, the Tamils merged with the Cinhalese, and still the peril

from the mainland continued, and the outlines of the pure Cinhalese kingdom began to vanish. And at last the Kings, for safety's sake, rose up and deserted the Sacred City, and moved their metropolis far inland. During his brief day of ill-won glory Kasyapa the Parricide ruled from the Lion Rock; Anuradhapura was left to its monks and abbots, to fade in neglect or to pass away in fire, according as the ever-recurring invaders might choose.

Then, by grace of his Tamil ancestry and Tamil alliances, P'rakram' Bahu the Great became master of all Ceylon in the twelfth century, and his reign throws the last gleam of brightness over the history of Lanka. He built a new and splendid capital at Polonnarua—far, far away in the heart of the jungle—and there he adorned the wide Lake of Topawewa, and thither he removed the Tooth-Relic of the Perfect One. And he did mighty works, too, in the abandoned Anuradhapura, cleaning, clearing, and restoring. But after P'rakram' Bahu the state of the country sank back once more into the dark chaos of endless invasion, of weakly, helpless Kings, of palace intrigue and ecclesiastical cabal that had burdened the history of so many earlier years. Polonnarua went the way of Anuradhapura, and the Kings of Lanka, with their Court, fled further and further southward, for ever seeking a sure capital against the Tamil and Cholyan invaders. And so the kingdom shrank and shrank, growing an ever smaller and smaller islet amid the welter of lawlessness and rapine. And at last the Kings of Lanka found their dominion limited to the mountain country, and made their final stand at Kandy, in the core of the hills, where no enemy could come near.

So here, through the centuries, they exercised their mutilated sway, and here they had their palaces, and here, too, the Tooth-Relic continued its wild adventurous

career. From capital after capital had it moved; in rebellion after rebellion had it been made the talisman and palladium; here, at last, in the latest Daladá Mâligawa was enacted the final scene in its tragedy. Meanwhile the first ripples of the West had begun to beat on the shores of Lanka. The Dutch and the Portuguese were making good their position in Ceilao. The agony of the Cinhalese kingdom was at hand. Here the Dutch came trading, and the Portuguese even established a brief royalty at Kandy. And here, at their hands, was perpetrated the Great Sacrilege. But they were ultimately driven from Kandy, and the old Kings resumed their sway, though the town itself was almost the limit of their ascendency. And here, through the years, they dragged out a brutal, feeble despotism in their palaces until the English came, and with them the conclusion of the pitiful history. It was the old story of English intervention: concessions first, and many reasonable protestations and pretences; then a strained situation, words of wrong on both sides, an eye kept constantly fixed on the capital in the hills. And then comes the end: a bad, tyrannical King, worse than his predecessors; the inevitable pretext seized, and the inevitable *casus belli* discovered; the English advance on Kandy, and the British Raj sealed in the blood of the last Mudaliyar Princes on the very steps of the Daladá Mâligawa. Can it be wondered, then, if a place whose whole story has been one long record of decay and grief, to end at last in a violent death, should lie now very placid in the tragic exhaustion of the final rest after turmoil?

It is evening before the midday train from Colombo runs down over the high passes into Kandy. The first part of the journey is over the flattest of rich land—paddy-field, banana-grove, and palm-forest—and acres of

gay water-lilies and lotus. And then, after Polgarahawela, the scene changes, and the train sets itself to wind up amid the blue jagged hills that have been coming nearer ever since we left Colombo. Famous among the beauties of the world is this climb to Kandy; and justly so. Mountains jagged or bossy, jungle, cultivated land or tangled river-bank—all in the afternoon are clad in that almost opaque turquoise blue which never fails to glorify Cinhalese landscape at about three o'clock of a fine day. Away and away they unfold, those hills, sometimes easy and heavy in their lines, sometimes stringent and craggy—isolated pinnacles with some small shrine or fortalice at their summit. Far down the steep bank, up which the train goes winding, the terraced rice-fields descend like gigantic waved stairways, or like successive ripples left on the hill-side by some retiring sea. And still the depth grows greater; the valleys dwindle and shrink before our eyes, their vegetation merges into a cloudy opulence of green; and still the wide ranges unfold, ridge beyond ridge, into the heart of the hill-country.

Then, at a turn, we come face to face with the bare, bald peak of Allagalla, rising stark above us to the height of several thousand feet. Naked here is the smooth rock, and round the knees of the mountain has slipped its drapery of herbage. The railway undulates about the flank of Allagalla, perpetually climbing, then makes a pass, and coils into the flank of the hills. Far and very far below now, the minute undulations of the rice terraces give a strange effect. Water lies over them in a film, and beneath the shadow of each terrace-bank the marsh has a blue steely glimmer, giving exactly the chill phosphorescence of hoar-frost. You would swear that you are looking down over an infinite stairway of frosted rungs. And the undulations of the terraces grow ever wilder and

more grotesque, as you can see them more and more clearly filling out the whole landscape of the extended valleys beneath, until your gaze attains to the wooded mountains beyond. For every nook and every cranny of that pitiless slope has been made into a rice-field, banked up in cunning curves to grow its contribution to the common stock, even if that contribution be no more than a teaspoonful of grains. Then the train turns away from these fertile hill-sides, and secludes itself in a secret nook of the mountain, winding up a narrow gorge, filled with rough grasses and a little stream. At the head of this is the final pass, and thence, gathering impetus with every yard, the train runs gladly down to Kandy. Past Peradeniya we go hurrying, its station all aglow with rich curtains of white Thunbergia, that shine in the twilight; and so on, down smooth imperceptible slopes of wood and field, until we draw up at the terminus.

Kandy lies a hundred feet and more above its station. On alighting, one cannot guess where the lake and the town may be; but one drives up a steepish incline through the gloaming, and there, at the top, inclosed in its high vandyked balustrade of ancient stone and stucco, lies the lake. Embosomed deep on all sides by rounded, plumy hills it lies, winding away in curve and inlet to where it ends in the glen that marks the original course of the streamlet, which the Kings of Kandy swelled into this lovely water. In the middle of its smooth expanse stands up a wee palm-grown islet, with its ruin of a bygone powder magazine. Down by its nearer shore lies the hotel, long and low, separated only by the roadway from the lake. Beyond this, again, there is a wide mown rectangle of forbidden lawn, adorned by the image of a soldier on a horse, waving a sword and frantically demeaning himself. This unhappy statue, lacking reticence and repose, might well

have been spared to this haunt of sad ancient peace. It swears britannically at its surroundings, for beyond the green expanse lies, under the wooded hill itself, the round polygonal tower, the long white walls and balustrades of the most august shrine in all the East. For here is the Daladá Mâligawa, last of its sacred name, where rested, after its many adventurous wanderings, the Tooth-Relic of Our Lord Buddha; and here the Holy Thing is still formally enshrined. Placid and sleepy by day is the Daladá Mâligawa; beggars and ascetics sun themselves on its worn moonstone; children and tourists come to buy rice from its peripatetic vendor to feed the fishes which swarm in the straight narrow moat of green water that protects the whole frontage of the buildings; and water-tortoises emerge to sun themselves on the lower courses of the library tower, decorating the white plaster like so many images in cast bronze, until the nearer approach of a stranger, unadvisedly climbing the peaked outer parapet, causes them to perk their heads in alarm, and then go plop, plop, plop into the water beneath. Across the road from the Daladá Mâligawa lies an appanage of the abbey—a broad expanse of sacred ground, whose bounding wall makes the fourth side to that rectangle of green on which the truculent horseman disports himself. Here is a very old, very great bo-tree, with vast spread of knotted roots. Here are small dâgabas and shrines, brilliantly white with chûnam plaster. Here, too, is a school and a guest-house for pilgrims and strange monks, and everywhere these buildings glimmer and gleam through the foliage of trees. This blessed territory of quiet stands in my memory as the Garden Temple, the main monastery buildings of the Daladá Mâligawa lying behind the main shrine itself.

The encircling hills descend very close upon the Daladá Mâligawa, but on its left, as you look up the lake, they

recede in a broad curve, leaving room for a steep wooded slope, on which nestle, in immemorial tranquillity, the embowered bungalows of fortunate Government officials. And this territory may well be beautiful, for this is the chosen ground of the old Kandyan Kings, and the bungalows of the officials have been carved from the wreckage of bygone palaces. Deep-buried in leafage of palm and liane and spathodea stands here and there some ancient portico of stone, some carved entrance to the dwelling of a long-forgotten Queen. But, truth to tell, this lovely garden slope is more lovely now, with its long trim bungalows, embedded in blossom and hanging baskets of greenery, than it can ever have been in the blood-stained days of Kandyan royalty; for what is left of the palaces and the houses that have been made from them show them to have been scattered, low, undignified buildings, peppered here and there, with no scheme or magnificence, capable of being turned into delightful dwelling-places, but by no means suiting the majesty and splendour of Kings. Yet a poor, moribund majesty was this of the Kandyan Kings. Up beyond and behind the Daladá Mâligawa sits huddled away a dusty little grimy museum, containing the pitiful relics of their Kandyan handicrafts. Ugly are they all; ugly and mean and without taste or aspiration—brass trays, carved woods, mangled stone sculptures from doorway or step—the art of a day that had no morrow, and that had long forgotten the glorious yesterday which painted Sigiri and carved the Wata-dâ-Gé at Polonnarua. Indeed, the Kandyan art has passed beyond decadence into the old crudities of mere barbarism, the circle thus meeting in the end, where the decay of an art leads one back to the very beginnings of all art.

Continuing along the shore from the Daladá Mâligawa, we follow many an inlet and bay, fringed with tall palms

that stand arow beside the placid water. First there towers out over the lake, built up on piles, the pillared and gabled edifice that once was the bathing-house of Kandyan Kings, and is now turned to some official use. Conspicuous from all sides, this palace makes the keynote in every view of Kandy ; and opposite, across the road, lies the precinct and abbey of the Daladá Mâligawa, where, amid a grove of palms, the tusker elephants are daily tugging stone blocks for the delight of visitors and the building of a new wing to the monastery. After this the course of the lake-side road becomes beautifully uneventful, following the windings of the water, and skirting innumerable bungalows buried in greenery and flowers. Crossing the glen at the end, our rickshaw brings us round the farther side, by the doors of the other hotel, embosomed in jungle above us, and past many a deep creek and bay. The hideous raw material of a new hotel appears at one point, and then, huddled on promontories, several monasteries amid their palms. Among others, here is the Flower-Garden Monastery, the Malwatté Wihara, whose abbot is one of the custodians appointed for the Relic.

At last we reach the dam of the lake, and return along its ancient parapet to the hotel in front of us. Far down to our left lies the station, the market, and the many crowded activities of the Peradeniya road. The main town of Kandy consists of several straight, intersecting streets of wooden houses, and lies at the back of the hotel. Beyond and to the right of these there stands, just at the foot of the slope where the royal palace has been made into bungalows, a square-towered Christian church of rust-coloured stucco, which would be the ugliest thing in the world if it had not a Methodist rival down the road, built on the same model, but with plaster of a leprous white. Those who like rust will suffer less anguish from the

Anglican erection ; those who prefer leprosy will find their agony minimized by the Methodists'. But agony is inevitable, and the tinny clangour of their bells for ever lacerates the holy calm of Kandy no less effectually than does their hideousness rend and claw at the gentle harmony of the old dead capital. For Kandy is one of those places whose charm defies analysis. In itself, perhaps, it is not extraordinarily beautiful. The hills are squatty in line, the town sordid, regular, and mean; the palaces and temples blank and unimpressive ; the *coup d'œil* petty, straggling, devoid of outstanding features or beauties. And yet, when all is said and done, Kandy makes as strong an appeal as any corner of the world. It is so calm, so gentle, so extinct. There is always here a ghostly afternoon, a perfect rest after anguish, a perfect forgetfulness of time and things.

Is it the streets of Kandy at night, lighted brilliantly, clamorous with half a thousand vendors, full of half a million rubbishes ? Out into the roaring tide one sallies from the hotel, to lose oneself in the cheerful babel of tongues ; and as one wanders down the long street, past innumerable shops, to fancy oneself once more on Jizo-zaka of a matsuri-night. And then, wearied by the roar, we stroll back on to the mole and perch on one of the pinnacles of the parapet. Far before one sleeps the lake, lapping drowsily against the foot of the balustrade, and filling all the hollow of the hills with its pale shimmer—a dusky gray expanse, reflecting here and there a star. On its steep further shore, rising in many small pinnacles and peaks, the poised bungalows, invisible now amid the blackness of their embosoming greenery, are all so many hanging constellations of light. Dusky along the dusky blue of the sky lie all the enclosing hills, and in the heavy plumage of the trees overhead faint fireflies flicker and

fade. The air is quiet with a rich, deep sweetness, thrilling lazily with wafts of fragrance from unguessed flowers far away; always velvety, profound and tranquil. Across the stillness to our left lies the extended front of the hotel over the quivering gleam of the water, and the barbaric effect of its arcade, illuminated through panes of topaz, amethyst, ruby, emerald, and thrown up again from the lake in smooth answering jewel-flashes of emerald, ruby, amethyst, topaz, becomes a glamour, rich and fairy-like, under the transfiguring magic of mother night. And through the healing gulf of silence in which we are plunged pierces only the dim susurrence of cicalas in the trees that stand, immovable black bronzes, along the shore of the water, or up the crowded slopes that now are nothing but enormous crested waves of darkness, foaming up and up to the dense sapphire of the sky.

Or shall it be afternoon from one of the gardens above the old palace? Here the trees droop loads of tasselled coral, or aspire in bunched flames of orange to heaven. Over high forest giants flows the unrelenting curtain of Thunbergia, one woven cloak of deep green, starred with clear flowers of palest wide-mouthed lavender. At night these clothed obelisks of vegetation become obscurity made solid, very reproduction of the funeral cypress, stark and ominous; but by day they are gracious draperies of emerald, glorious with the abundance of their pale bloom. Here and there are duly placed huge clumps of bamboo, waving their light plumage from a thousand arching culms—but of bamboos fed surely on the Food of the Gods—enormous gracious incarnations of grace, topping an English forest oak, and spraying through the wide air like gigantic fountains for ever frozen into position, except, indeed, when a wave of the wind thrills through them, and they dance and undulate and scatter

rhythmically, filling the garden with a soft dry rustling. Different from these, again, is the clamour of the palms. The cocoanut has a husky, caressing whisper; but the cocoanut has no love for Kandy. Here are only talipots and big-leaved palms, that clap their leaves furiously when angry, with a furious slapping energy, producing a sere din like tropical rain on a tin roof, or vexed leathern-winged ghosts in threat of a swoop. And, amid all these, in clear spaces, misguided skill has caused a few English flowers to linger anæmically; for residents in Ceylon, and their Cinhalese gardeners, have a high scorn for the native glories of Ceylon, and where, with no effort, they might have a riot of natural splendour, they spend toilful years in trying to induce a violet or an outraged primrose to put forth one sickly bud.

And then, above all this, far above the waving fountains of bamboo, far above the invisible lake that lies below us at the foot of the slope, there rises dominant over the blue and purple distance of mountain and jungle the dark peak of Hantenné—pitiless pinnacle, last relic of an old volcanic crater, and still recorded as the Place of Death, rumour so having it that the Cinhalese Kings used the crag as a convenient place from which to throw such persons as displeased them. In mid-afternoon all Ceylon goes turquoise—of a clear, solid turquoise such as no other scene in nature can match—and from the garden of delights, over the pungent, shallow green showers of the bamboo, the blue of Hantenné, opaque, enamelled, yet translucent, is richer, clearer, and more startling than any other distance that atmosphere could ever glorify.

I have less love for Kandy at midday. Kandy at midday is a place of dust and glare. In the hotel the prudent are taking their rest and lounging in the arcade; the planter is refreshing himself at the bar (not that this

is any special symptom of any special time of day). Cool and twilit is the hotel, an abode of peace except when the air is filled with multitudes of microscopic black flies, that seem to float without motion, like motes, and always to be on the point of flying into one's eyes, though, as a matter of fact, they are rarely so foolish as to do any such thing. If one goes out, it is into a blazing world of black shadows and blinding lights. Of course there are always shops to be seen—at any time of day displays of the old jewellery, for which Kandy is now the sole mart: chains of ancient frail gold wrought into lovely designs; bossed great dagger-pointed hairpins of worked silver crusted with white tourmaline from Mâtăra; ouches and necklets of plain gold, flat-set with countless round rubies, after the Indian style; nose-rings, ear-rings, finger-rings crowded with ruby; armlets of crystals entwined with silver filigree; and brooches, brooches, brooches, in a hundred designs, all set with white tourmaline in pinchbeck or silver. And of these many are bad, and some are good; many spurious, and also many genuine. The old hairpins, notably, have a wild barbaric beauty, are authentic, are growing rare, and will ere long be unprocurable.

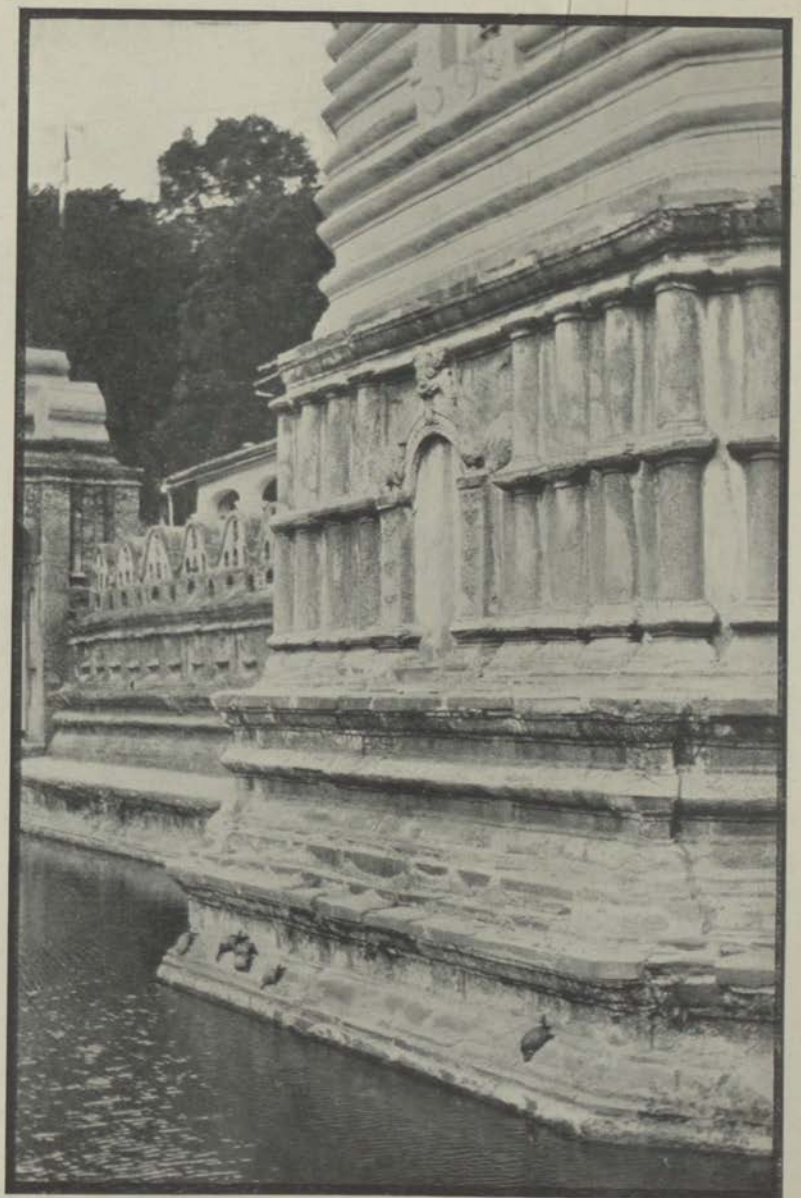
Then there is usually a display of ugly boxes made of porcupine quills; of tiresome banal elephants carved in ebony, and loved by the tourist; of hideous Kandyan brassware, and of very inferior Blue-and-white, the refuse of China sent here for domestic service in the days of the Kandyan Kings. Sometimes, however, the old brass work is of interest; sometimes, though much more rarely, it has beauty. Some people collect little boxes, like elongated snuff-boxes of chased brass, of which, in their day, the Dutch made a speciality. Most of them, accordingly, are uncouth and barbaric in design; but I hailed their appearance with interest, for long before I had been

given a specimen that was tossing unvalued in a little Yorkshire furniture shop, and in all those years had never learned its use or history.

And then, of course, are the jewellers' stores—more attractive, because more primitive, than those of Colombo—mere open caverns, into which you may go and play with shifting, gleaming heaps of multicoloured treasures, letting them slide and pour and trickle through your fingers in the sunlight—a very Lodore of brilliancy and colour. Mr. Cassalebbe, of all the Cassalebbes in Trincomalee Street head and chief, will bring you from his cabinets whole bales and sacks of preciousness to stream and flicker across the table in rivers and waterways of light—blue moonstone, cornflower sapphire, garnet, cinnamon, tourmaline, and topaz; then from a piece of rag come round star sapphires, milky-blue, flashing their six-fold glory; and after them a ruby—huge, regular, and of a bloody red-currant colour that almost makes you wink. You ask the price, expecting to hear that Kings must pine for it in vain, and Emperors decline with tears to make their States bankrupt for such a treasure. And the price is £2. For the cunning ones of to-day take a quantity of little valueless rubies and smash them to fine powder, and then fuse the dust by heat or some such method into one perfect stone of dazzling colour and brilliance. And the only means by which the uninitiated can discern the artifice is by holding the gem to the light. Then, and then only, will you see, far down at its heart, a few microscopic, almost invisible, motes. These are the last tiniest, inexpugnable air-bubbles that the utmost force has not availed to squeeze out. But in any ornament or composition these made gems would be entirely indistinguishable from their priceless kindred—priceless only in their unity.

Then, sated with the Aladdin joys of the jewel-caverns, one may wander on down the blazing street, crowded, as always, with loud-voiced buyers and sellers. Except for the professed dealers in antiquities and gems, a Cinhalese street offers nothing of interest—no toys, no lovely silks, no delicious daintinesses of a hundred and one useless delights, such as detain us at every step in Kyoto and Tokyo. Here there are only cheap gaudy prints and cottons, sewing-machines, chromo-lithographs of Kings and Czars; above all, there are wildernesses and acres and mountains of dried fish, of salt fish, of fish in every sort, size, shape, and condition, of fish in every state of sere and repellent mummification. The whole of Ceylon seems to live on desiccated fish, and the sharp, spicy smell of its poignant, disguised decay makes dreadful every street where the Cinhalese ply their businesses. Condiments, too, there are—pepper in piles, chillies, all the concomitants of curry; nameless horrors twisted into greenery, or baked in buns, or embalmed in greasy fritters.

Then down the street comes a thumping and a crowd. It is the Moormen, the Mahommedans, collecting funds for their mosque. This quête occurs yearly. The collectors, arrayed in huge turbans of pink and many colours, are strangely painted and bedizened. One of them, nearly naked, is striped and dappled to pass as a tiger. Streaks of mud are drawn across his body, and he wears a grinning tiger-mask. In this, with feline grace, he sidles, mopping and mowing, across the road, slinking after this person or that, while the crowd gives way before him with little gasps of admiring terror and delight. And so cunningly does the fellow do it, so truly does he catch the lithe horror of his model, that there, in that baking street, in that crowd, in that ridiculous disguise, he contrives to convey a very real impression of something furtive,



TORTOISES ON THE LIBRARY TOWER OF THE DALADÁ MÁLIGAWA, KANDY.

devilish, and subtle. His comrades meanwhile go beating drums with ear-splitting noise, and the group, with its attendant crowd, moves onwards up the road, bent on advertisement and the collecting of money. Here and there, too, in some Moorman's shop, you will see the doorway masked by a temporary shrine or tabernacle of coloured paper, tinsel, fringes, tassels, and rosettes.

And so at last the day draws down into dusk, the glare gives place to coolness, the tourists emerge upon their way, whirling down to Katugastoté to see the elephants bathing in Máhawéliganga, or driving up the serpentine roads that climb the hills and reveal in each direction a more lovely and a more Cumbrian panorama. Every Governor's wife has a drive named after her, and so one trembles to think what will happen, as Governors' wives continue to come and go, while the wide earth itself has not room for roads enough to carry all their names. If we have no longing to take Lady Blake's drive or Lady MacCarthy's, and see a glorified version, from the summit, of our own Lake Country, we can gently return up the long slope of the street, past the entrance to the Pavilion, where, embowered in gardens, the Governor has his palace, and sets it at the disposal of the august; past the rust-coloured church at its gate; past ruined Kandyan palaces, to where the Daladá Mâligawa is beginning to call the evening worshipper. And, in the beautiful tranquillity of the scented afternoon, nothing can spoil the sovereign impression of old Kandy—not the square-towered church itself, like an erection of cardboard; not even the curly, ornate fountain at the corner of the way, tricked out with figures and adornments of bright green verdigrised bronze, which the planters set up to commemorate the visit of King Edward.

Through the clear air pierces insistent the call of the

Daladá Mâligawa, for the great shrine wakes at evening, and the thunder of its drums blends throbbing with the long scream of the conches, twisting and winding like the bagpipes. The approaches now are crowded, the portico thronged with vendors of flowers. So we cross the moat through the towering archway, from whose dilapidated frontage greenery is sprouting, and pass along the inner passage, to where a flight of steps leads up at right angles, beneath a roof of Humphrey's corrugated iron, to the entrance of the holy place itself. And here, in the cool dim vault of the cloister, one puts off one's shoes as best one may, for the agonizing snarl, nasal and undulating, of the conches at our back. Terrible, indeed, as the bagpipe is the conch—own brother to the bagpipe too, in the protracted ferocity of its screams, their ramifications, their personal note of intense annoyance, aggrievance, and a peevishness so dominant as to verge upon devilish malice. Up and down, in and out, goes the cat-calling, blaring plaint of the conches, and through it all steadily throbs the drum.

Passing down the arched way over the time-worn flags, we come out at last into the enclosure, hedged in on its four sides by the cloister. Round the arcade are rooms and dwelling-places ; in the centre is a smooth cleared space, from the very midst of which rises isolated the Swiss-châlet-like mass of the shrine itself; for the home of the Relic has no rich bulk, no commanding dignity. It is a fabric of carved wood, gabled and eaved, supported on heavily carved wooden columns, and painted all over with crude frescoes from holy scenes. Darkness hangs round it now, gray and calm in the open, and a deeper darkness in the deep recesses and arcades of the cloister, which here at the entrance is of doubled depth. The doors, though, of the chapel are thrown wide, and a glow of

light radiates forth from the illuminated sanctuary. One by one yellow-robed monks and abbot go trooping in to the service. About the eaves of the shrine the zeal of Burmese brethren has introduced electric light, and this now depends, in rubied globes and shades of the most European ugliness, from long cords all round the line of the eaves, at a given signal lacerating the silken twilight with its ghastly aniline glare. A hard and needless task it is to explain to one of the humble ones that his offering, full of merit for its perfervid excellence, might yet have taken a form more honourable and congruous to the holy place. And still the conches continue their swirling bray, and still the crowd gathers closer to the celebration. In and out amid the multitudes go the sellers of flowers, and the air is heavy with the cool, sharp fragrance of the temple-flower. Five-cleft is the corolla of the temple-flower, of creamy texture, and of a creamy colour that deepens insensibly to rich yellow at the centre; and its scent is of the same texture, of the same colour as the flower—a thick, waxy-sweet scent, creamy, dense, and primrose. It haunts all the shrines of Lanka with its pungent, uplifting ecstasy, and never any little vihara or dâgaba shall you find that has not its gnarled and ancient tree of plumiera, bossy and twisted and contorted in growth, with corrugated bark of pure silver and leafless twigs, thick and stumpy as a sausage, crowned by clusters of those divine flowers, ready always for offering at the shrine.

The complement of worshippers is made up, and service goes eagerly forward in the glow of many candles. Not there, though—not in that lower chapel—is the Holy of Holies, that omphalos of all the East, which from North and South, the whole world over, is held the noblest pilgrim spot on earth. For the reliquary of the Tooth dwells in a dark and tiny adytum overhead, to be approached up a

stairway and through the ante-space of another smaller chapel than this of ordinary worship on the floor beneath. And so we turn at last, our ears stunned into deafness by drum and conch, to seek healing from their wounds amid the blessed stillness of the Garden Temple across the road.

Night is fast drawing her veils across the face of earth, and the rare white domes and dâgabas of the Garden Temple gleam fitful and ghostly through the trees as we mount the steps into the precinct. The air is hushed here, and holy; the sky overhead of a soft, obscure sapphire; while the last orange glows are fading out of the west. Blue films and wraiths of vapour seem to be tenants of the garden; blues, soft and tender, dwell amid the tree-trunks; and a deeper blue, mysterious and primal, lurks in dark hollows and recesses. Through the sacred stillness, appeased and transfigured by the evening air, the drums still throb from the Daladâ Mâligawa, and the cry of the conches is the voice of an unresting sorrow. And in the middle of the garden, the mountainous range of his roots girt about with a protective parapet, that vast ancient Bo-tree showers his branches far abroad in flights of big motionless moths through the gathering darkness. Flitting shadowy figures, dwarfed by his immensity to pigmies, are wavering here and there about his feet; and here and there the sudden kindling of a little gleam amid the blue depths reveals that these are the faithful, layman or monk, lighting their votive tapers before the shrines of the tree, in memory of that consummating sacrifice witnessed so long ago in India by its yet more blessed ancestor, when Our Lord Buddha towered in a night to the stature of the universe.

All the Garden Temple is confounded now in a deep blue darkness, and the boughs of the holy tree are growing hard to discern. The snowy shrines and dâgabas are

turned to a ghostly grey, and a very great stillness—the stillness of tropical night—has followed, like balm, on the surcease of that high wailing from the Daladá Mâligawa. Brighter and brighter gleam the candles in the shrines that break the parapet round the roots of the tree. And still come the faithful, like shadows through black shadowland, to kindle their offerings of light in memory of that Great Light of long ago. Soundless on the soft bare ground fall their unsandalled feet; they come and pass like thoughts in this chaotic dream of transience that we call life. But they leave behind them a small point of radiance such as not every thought we entertain has power to leave in the twilight of our purposes.

Flowers, too, they bring, and lay with prayer and blessing before the painted gaudy image of Our Lord, that occupies each little ark amid the recesses of the bo-tree's roots. What shall prayer achieve except self-suggested strength to him who prays: and what percentage on their investment do offerings and sacrifices return beyond the added holiness and gladness of the heart that has gladly made them? Here, then, along the parapet of the holy tree, let us also kindle innumerably the tapers of friendly thought, to shine out like stars down the uncertain obscurity of our future. Perhaps by force of grateful joy in comradeship our offering may have force to renew that comradeship, in other times, and no less happy than these. And now the roots of the bo-tree are all a galaxy of little brilliant flames that hardly twinkle in the sweet motionless warmth of the air. All else, now, is impenetrable night—only shine those symbols of gratitude and friendship. So leave we the Garden Temple invisible in darkness, and go back to our old palace on the hill, to remember always the innumerable friendly glow of our votive tapers round the feet of that ancient kindly holiness.

CHAPTER V

IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

THE Primate Sumângala, Archbishop of the Peak and the Southern Province, who had received me into the Congregation, had also taken measures to secure me a private view of the Relic, and had armed me with letters of commendation to the Abbot of Malwatte Wihara. But on my arrival in Kandy I was officially notified that the Holy Thing was to be shown the next afternoon to an Imperial Prince of Japan; and with him, therefore, and his suite, did I attend at the time appointed in the gallery of the library tower at the Daladá Mâligawa.

Or rather there, at the time specified, did I await the coming of His Imperial Highness. For the illustrious visitor tarried, and I had ample time to inspect the library of the illustrious shrine. The walls are lined with roll upon roll of scriptures, protected by glass cases, and on the round table that occupies the centre of the little polygonal room lay yet other and more sumptuous copies of the Canon, shielded in coverlids of embroidered satin. From the cool chamber one steps out into the gallery that runs round the upper story of the library tower, and thence, in the green blaze of afternoon, all Kandy lies extended breathless before you, the placid water sleeping to your left behind the avenue of trees; in front, the expanse of mown green lawn, with the agitated horseman in the

distance; and beyond these the low mass of the hotel, with the town concealed behind its bulk. To the right all ugliness is blocked by the precincts of the Garden Temple, whose dâgabas and domes from here shine clean and white amid their setting of verdure. Far down, at the foot of the tower, laps the water of the moat, stirred only by eager multitudes of tiny fishes, that make a fretted ripple on the surface as they stream towards any possibility of food. On to the lowest courses of the masonry the water-tortoises have emerged to bask, and if one lean over from the gallery one can see their brazen immobility rooted—it seems immortally—to the stone.

The old temple is alive this drowsy afternoon with a dim rustle and hush. Up and down the worn grey corridors the yellow robes go wandering one by one in uneasy expectation. The flower-sellers and the beggars are crowded in the portico; impudent guides are eager to force their services on the visitor. In the gallery are gathered several English people, drawn by the unusual chance. For it is very rarely, and only on august occasions, that the Sacred Thing is made manifest in privacy. It has, of course, its due state functions, its high monstrances and processions on the days of festival; but through the rest of the year the Tooth-Relic lies buried in darkness. So a handful of spectators is collected here, among them a mother who tells her little fair child, when he seems unduly sportive, that he must "hush, and remember that he is in church." The monks attendant on the library smile happily at this considerateness, and the child plays on unrebuked. He wants to buy the big old elephant in the compound, and offers half a rupee. In the midst of the laughter caused by all this, a stir makes itself suddenly felt. A procession of hired one-horse carriages has turned down from the Malabar Road,

and is driving up to the gate of the Daladá Mâligawa. It is the Prince arriving with his train.

Now rumour whispers and crowds through the twilight of the cloisters. The monks make off to attend upon the visitor; the Prior with his train is welcoming His Imperial Highness on the steps. But the Abbot has gone away, it seems, as far as I can gather, to some monastery of the hills, leaving his deputy to make the revelation of the Relic. Incongruously and without dignity the imperial visitor arrives, a man of unusual height for his race, straw-hatted, with half a dozen straw-hatted attendants. All are clad in European clothes, and cluster perfunctorily on the heels of their guide, with a suggestion about their hurried manner that they want to hasten through this tedious inevitable duty and be done with it. We, for our part, descend the stairs from the library tower and join the party in the arcade before the shrine itself. Now the Government Agent's Viceroy meets us, and conveys the whole party round the cloister to its further end, at the back of the temple that holds the centre of the open space. Here, in one of these little rooms, the Kandyan custodian is donning his robes of ceremony; for the sacrosanctity of the Relic is such that it may not repose under any sole guardianship of mortal, not even under the guard of the British Raj itself. The responsibility is shared, I believe, between the Government, three of the great Abbots, and three of the Kandyan chieftains—last relics of the old kingdom here in Kandy. These have keys of the adytum and the golden Dâgaba. Not without complicated manœuvrings, and passings of the key from one high official to another, can the shrine be made open—no, not by the Abbot of the Daladá Mâligawa himself. Inevitably, a certain proportion of the custodians must be present before the Relic is revealed.

And the Kandyan chieftain "se fait attendre." There are whisperings, trottings to and fro along the corridor of the cloister, tappings at doors, inquiries, apologies. His Imperial Highness murmurs to his attendants, laughs, and grows impatient. Behind us, at the entrance to the shrine, is gathered now a multitude of sightseers and pious, eager to press after us and see what they may of the sanctifying spectacle. The square enclosure is filled with a hum, whose subdued murmur reverberates all round from the eaves of the arcade. At last the chieftain emerges. No wonder that his preparations took time, for he is the most gorgeous spectacle. A magnificent old man, stalwart, tall, erect, portly, with a face at once beautiful and royal; serene, aquiline, with streaming beard of gray—the very face of Œdipus the King. And he is clothed in pantalettes of white muslin, ruched round his ankles like a ham-frill. About his middle is wound some six miles of similar muslin, starred and spangled with gold, until his figure has the shape of a bobbin or a peg-top. His shirt is snowy fine, and over it he wears an Eton jacket, very short, with puffed gigot sleeves. Its material is of some marvellous brocade, stiff and opulent, in which the ground colour, of hot rich salmon, glimmers and glows through a film of pure gold, shifting, changing, darkening, disappearing in altered planes and folds of the fabric as he moves. His cap or crown is a big flattened biretta, hard, four-sided, of crimson satin, hidden from sight with jewels and embroideries of gold. In state this commanding figure comes advancing down the cloister, makes his welcome to the visitor, and so the company returns to the main entrance of the shrine. Here, with some ado, the crowd is beaten aside to make place, and we wait in a cleared space before the folding doors. Next there is a clamour, and up through the throng advances from the main gate

behind us the Lord Abbot of the Malwatté Wihara, attended by his acolytes and officials. Bowing low to all, the Abbot advances to the door of the shrine, and then, turning, receives from the old chief a bundle clothed in many-coloured stuffs. It is the key. Then slowly on their hinges swing wide the doors of the church. We chosen ones press in and on to the side-entrance, by which we mount the stairs to the upper story.

And here we find ourselves in a small bare room, at the end of which lies another, yet smaller, filled with dense darkness. There are no windows to this floor, and only a ghostly light pervades even the outer chamber. Advancing to the threshold of the further room, we see looming before us fitfully, high up in the gloom, a ghostly shape of gold, enclosed in sheets of plated glass, that glimmer like ice by night. It is the Reliquary itself—or rather the outermost covering of the Reliquary—an eight-foot dâgaba of plain metal, gold or silver gilt, shaped like a gigantic handbell, whose pinnacle is lost in the darkness overhead. Before it stands a table or altar, draped with brocade and laden with temple-flowers, whose pungent sweetness fills that tiny vault of darkness with an almost overpowering ecstasy. On either side of the dâgaba are rolled back the strong jeweller's grilles of iron, that usually are locked in front for the further protection of the treasure.

Meanwhile lights are brought, two candles in German-silver candlesticks of art-nouveau design. The old chief enters the shrine, and takes his stance to the left of the altar. After him the Abbot stations himself to the right—a frail, aged man, whose whole body is shaking with the holy awe of the occasion and the Presence in which he stands. In palsied hand he holds a candlestick, and its yellow glow throws up into uncanny relief the crimson-

satin ceiling of the high roof, and the eager earnest faces gathered round the shrine. Keenly, in bold splashes of black and yellow, stand out against vast wavering ebony shadows on the wall the splendid profile of the old chief, the bald, gleaming head, the reverent humility of the Abbot. The Prince stands alone on the threshold of the adytum, the Holy of Holies barely admitting more than two. I and his attendants stand at his shoulder. Behind us presses hard the uninvited crowd, filling the outer room to suffocation. Many are the nations represented there: English men and women are among the throng; and my own body-servant has seized an opportunity afforded him by his service—an opportunity he had never before enjoyed.

Two monks are hard at work in the gloom behind the golden dâgaba. They are unlocking the frontage of plate-glass and lifting it away. As one's eyes grow more accustomed to the candlelight in that close confined place, one can see more clearly the details of the shrine. Fierce lights, black tossing shadows, make it a cave of witchery; and the insistent scent of the temple-flowers is shrill and alcoholic. Very tiny indeed is the Holy of Holies, for its lofty walls enclose so small a space that here is only room for the dâgaba, its altar, its two ministers, with standing room to right and left for the chieftain and the Abbot; and the partial light of the candle cannot pierce the depth of its shadows. Brilliantly shine the faces in the foreground, but overhead the roof of crimson satin fades away behind the shrine into obscurity, and the golden dâgaba itself is only seen as a dim monochrome of metal.

And then, as one gazes on its plain surface, one is aware of many eyes that wink and glow through the twilight—eyes red and green and lurid, peering forth from odd

bosses and tentacular processes that clothe the bellying curve of the dâgaba as if in the arms of strange sea-monsters. And still the light grows plainer and one's vision more accurate. The monks, mounted up beside the Reliquary, are unwinding these wreathed growths. One by one they hand them down to the Abbot, who lays them in a broad golden charger, covered with a long sheet; and faster and faster they come, the innumerable eyes more brightly twinkling—ropes, chains, pendants, manacles of gold and emerald, flat heavy plaques and ouches and frontlets of crowded ruby, shapes of fantastic bird and holy symbol wrought very long ago in mosaic of emerald and pearl. And still they come, the priceless treasures of old Kandyan Kings, the priceless votive offerings of days forgotten, draped lovingly in their profusion over the mere outer, least-honoured covering of the Sacred Thing.

Soon the charger brims over with treasures, and will hold no more. Then the Abbot folds the sheet across its contents, and so the piling begins anew. As each gift is unwound from the shrine, and laid by in the dish, the Abbot holds it round for our view, that we may note the piety of old dead days—the profound and gleaming light of ruby and emerald long since raked out of Ratnapura mines, and polished by craftsmen dead so long ago that their very names have perished. But at last the procession is ended; the last rope of gold and ruby, the last massive phœnix-pendant of cabochon emerald, has been removed; now the gilt dâgaba stands plain and bare. Then the monk on its left stoops down and fits a key into some small slot at the base; there is the snap of unlatching; the two ministers put all their force into the work; the dâgaba swings on its pedestal, tilts, and is bodily removed, to be set on one side. And there in its place stands another smaller than the last. But this one

is of pure gold—a blinding, twinkling, shimmering glory against the darkness behind. For it is set with bands and patterns, tassels and vallances, of blazing ruby and rainbow diamond. All round its tiers there hangs a swaying, jangling fringe of lacework—blended white flame and blood-red spark of blinking gems—the gift, in latter days, of the faithful from Burma. As they shake it in course of removal the brilliants flash and spatter fire through the dimness, and the hot red eyes of ruby glow and burn. For not nearly yet have we reached the heart of holiness. This dâgaba, and many more, again, are to be removed before we come to the core and kernel of all this wealth.

And from underneath, as in the toy of box within larger box, emerges golden dâgaba from beneath larger golden dâgaba, all bossed, embroidered, and enamelled in lines of crusted ruby, sapphire, diamond, and emerald. And as these reliquaries do not fit closely one within the other, there is room between the walls of the inner ones to store certain most precious treasures of the shrine. Forth, as we go, come huge and gorgeous jewels; armlets and crowns of special sanctity or value; and then, reverently raised and handed round for inspection, the famous seated figure of the Lord Buddha, carved from one solid emerald. Great as a man's closed fist is this marvel, and as one holds it to the light the whole gem glows with a profound and tranquil green translucence, very soft and deep and husky. And now the sheet has been turned again and again over fresh loads of treasure in the golden charger, yet not nearly is the store exhausted. Still pour forth from the depths of each dâgaba fresh wonders of gold-work or precious stone. And then appears the Monstrance itself, the stand on which the Holy Thing is exposed through its high days of festival and procession. On a wrought pedestal rises unfolded to its fullest span a wide shallow

lotus-bloom, whose broad petals are all of thin gold, unalloyed, dazzling, refined; and in the heart of the lotus is a clump of ruby, emerald, and diamond, from which, like some strange stigma, rises a quivering 3-inch stem of gold, invisible beneath its gems. And at the top, over successive rings of pure jewels, a jewelled circle, through which the Relic is affixed, to thrill and hover with the thrillings of that fine support.

But now we are nearing the heart of the mystery. The scented air grows oppressive and pregnant with wonder. The hands of the Abbot tremble in their ecstasy until he can hardly be trusted to hold each offering as it is handed out. The fifth and sixth dâgabas are lifted off in turn—the first a starry firmament of stones, clothed and muffled in a scarlet bandanna, the second a spiry pinnacle so close set with rubies as to seem one solid jewel. And under this is revealed a minute thing like a tiny thumb-stall of rubies. It is the covering of the very Relic. A hush of terrified expectancy fills the rooms—heavy in the antechamber, but in the shrine almost unbearable in its intensity. Even the Englishwomen behind, who had been gasping and marvelling covetously over the jewels, now grow silent and awed as the supreme moment approaches. The Prince stands impassive, but the Abbot is in ecstasy. An eager, fumbling movement, so emotional as to fail at first of its purpose, and the Holy Thing is revealed. A moment later it is raised to view between frail, frantic fingers, so fluttering with excitement that the Relic can hardly be seen. In another instant, though, it has been fitted through the ring of its Monstrance, and the whole is handed towards the Prince for him to view.

Curiously he bends over it, as a man inspecting something interesting in a museum; a gesture forbids him to touch it. He whispers something to an attendant, and

then makes a remark to the old chieftain. The suite and I press eagerly over one another to have a full, fair sight of what, so far, we had only seen in glimpses. The Abbot is ceaselessly adoring the Buddha with noiseless moving lips, and the monks are making their affirmation of "the Glorified, the Sanctified, the Supreme Lord Buddha." Over all hangs sovereign the scent of the temple-flower, carrying us straight back to the presence of the Holiness to whom it must have been offered, as now, so many centuries ago. And then over my neighbour's shoulder I lean to study the Sacred Thing.

The Tooth-Relic of Gautama Buddha, as you see it to-day, is a small morsel of bone, in shape and size and outline like the two top joints of a man's little finger. It is browned and polished and smooth, carefully rounded and flattened at the broader end. Needless to say, it is not only not the tooth of the Buddha, but not a human bone at all. Its appearance suggests the polished tush of a pig or boar. Nor is it unlikely that this is what the Relic actually is. For, though its latter history is obscure, such a substitution is what one might expect. The Tooth-Relic—tremendous as is now its sacrosanctity, and has been for many centuries—does not rank among the great original relics of Lankâ, and cannot, for instance, compare with the Collar-bone that lies under Thûparâma, or the nameless holy fragments enshrined beneath the enormous masses of Abhayagiriya, Mirisawétiya, Ruanwéli. The establishment of these, and their cult, date back to the very conversion of Lanka, and trace their sacrosanctity from the reign of the earliest Kings, Devanampiyatissa and Duttha Gamini. It was not till the reign of Siriméghavanna, pious successor of his heretic father, Maha Séna, in 304 A.C., that, as the Mahavansa tells us rather perfunctorily, "a certain Brahman Princess brought

over the Tooth-Relic from Kalinga." However, Siriméghavanna was glad to inaugurate the restoration of orthodoxy by the reception of so august a treasure, and duly received the Relic with the devoutest reverence. So he lodged the fragment—in all probability a genuine relic—in a shrine erected nearly three hundred years before by Devanampiyatissa. And to this day, close to the Thûparâma at Anuradhapura, will you see the ruins of the first Daladâ Mâligawa, in which the Tooth was honoured and cherished.

As time and change destroyed little by little the power of Lanka, the portability of the Tooth-Relic probably gave it a factitious importance; for, while the treasures of Thûparâma, Abhayagiriya, Ruanwéli, and Jétavánarâma would always be hard to come by and remove, necessitating the opening of passages and so forth, the Tooth, from a shrine reserved to itself—a church, not a dâgaba—could always be easily removed. And removed the Tooth-Relic accordingly was, attending the Cinhalese Court on all its disastrous flights towards security in the South. For a time it rested at Polonnarua during the brief interlude of brilliancy while P'rakram' Bahu held the throne, and after that accompanied the flying Kings southward, adding every day more and more to its prestige. Ultimately it became the palladium of the country, and wandered here and there like a fiery cross, no insurgent having any hope unless he could display the Tooth-Relic in the van of his army. The Alms-Bowl Relic also shared this prominent position, but, owing possibly to its fragility, ultimately disappeared from the scene, leaving the Tooth-Relic in sole occupation of the national cult. Finally, after innumerable adventures, the holy fragment came to rest at Kandy, in the last of its temples; and there comes the break in the story.

THE ORIGINAL DALADÁ MÂLIGAWA, THE TOOTH-RELIC'S FIRST SHRINE, AT ANURADHAPURA.

For, during the brief Portuguese occupation of Kandy, the Portuguese Bishop, filled with that tolerance in which Christian, and especially Catholic, priests have so agreeable a pre-eminence, removed the Tooth from its shrine, ground it to powder in a mortar, and cast the sacred dust into the tide of Máhawéliganga. And then one may choose between two alternatives: either the Portuguese — in mockery, perhaps, or else to spare the feelings of Lanka from too violent an outrage—substituted this bone-fragment for the genuine Relic; and, if they did it in derision, substituted a pig's tush; or else the abbots and monks of the shrine imagined and pretended that the Relic had never been destroyed at all. Indeed, it is quite obvious that no Churchman of no cult ever invented could acquiesce in the defeat and destruction of his supreme Relic. The difficulty *must* be got over somehow, and miracle invoked to cover the gap. Accordingly, whether the fraud be that of Portuguese or Cinhalese, it took root and flourished exceedingly, the assumption now being that, even if destroyed—a question left vague as I understand the matter—the Tooth-Relic was miraculously renewed in substance, and is still to be venerated by the faithful. At the same time, even though the Cinhalese eagerly supported the fraud, it is difficult to believe that they can have originated it; for in that case why did they not save the situation by substituting a genuine human tooth—no difficult task—instead of adopting a relic which has never made any part in man?

For, of course, no educated Buddhist throughout the world has any notion of believing in the literal authenticity of the little curved bone that lies at the heart of all those jewelled dâgabas in the adytum of the Daladá Mâligawa at Kandy. Such a crude and crass materialism is left for the mass of the uninstructed people. Salutary

for them, perhaps, and helpful, is a definite material belief in a definite visible fact ; but for souls more free from bondage such a pretence has no use, and the monks and abbots of Lanka would certainly disclaim in private any belief in the small object they are reverently exposing to the adoration of multitudes, even as a well-educated Roman prelate would smile discreetly if you asked him whether such and such a bone he had just been pompously exposing to the kisses of ecstatic women were in very deed the skull of St. Peter or the thumb of St. Jude. It is enough that these things should be adored, for through them are adored the holiness of which they, no less than any genuine relic, are the earthly representation.

For, while Truth is eternal, humanity is always making its own gods ; and little matters the shape and substance of those gods, so long as the truth through them is worshipped. It is everlastingly the spirit of the worship that counts, not the visible object of that worship. We come here at once on that fundamental truth of human psychology which the Japanese call nazoraëru—"substitution," or—better "transubstantiation," a factor universally true and universally prominent in all the world's religions, and all humanity's religious experiences. "Substitution" —'nazoraëru'—is simply a briefer statement of the fact that the worshippers' intention alone is of importance, and that every other consideration is insignificant. One's aspirations become facts under this law, and what one worships takes the place of that for which one worships it. Thus the poor widow in the Temple had only two mites, but with her whole heart she wished that they were more—a worthier, richer gift ; and so, by force of her pure intention, they had value in the eyes of the Eternal Buddha for what her intentions would have given had trammelling circumstance permitted. Alike in Roman,

Mahommedan, and Buddhist teaching the telling of the rosary is considered to have efficacy, if done with absorbed spirit; and the Mass is Christianity's culminating act of "nazoraëru'," whereby, eating bread in contemplation of the Divine, we are indeed assimilating the Divine itself. No mortal, again, has power to read all the Buddhist scriptures, but if the humblest peasant turns a prayer-wheel in Thibet in absolute desire to be master of the whole canon, then that desire has the same benefit upon his soul that the actual reading would have had; for our powers are never equal to our desires, and for our soul it is simply the desire, the unbounded aspiration and ambition, that has importance.

Of course, this psychological principle opens the way to all kinds of obvious abuses—to the substitution of observance for holiness, of mechanical performance for real striving of heart; but in its purity it is the guiding force of humanity. We are always taking it for granted, not only when we tell our beads, or revolve our wheel, but when we make a wax model of our enemy and stick it with pins, hoping to effect a mysterious incarnation of the real by the figment. And thus the most upleaping holiness, the most detached purity, may be evidenced in such intrinsically unimportant things as the going to church, the kissing of a relic, the putting of a penny in the bag; for these actions are only of value by "nazoraëru'," as tokens, substitutions, symbols of the utter goodness that we are yearning to compass. And while the actions by themselves are, of course, valueless and of none avail, yet, being done in perfect simplicity and sincerity, they have a supreme value for our souls as faint, but encouraging, reflections of what we are longing, and trying, to attain.

And therefore it makes no difference whether the relic we adore be the Tooth of the Buddha or the bone of a

swine : the skull of St. Peter, or of some nameless skeleton from the catacomb ; for the relic has no real existence. It is not the relic we adore, but the Divine essence, which, for convenience and for our mortal frailty, we are taking as represented by the relic. As easily might any other odd old trash call up our minds, if the will were there, to the contemplation of that undimmed radiance towards which we reach. Of course, to the less-developed imagination it will always be a help to believe the relic genuine, but to those who see further and clearer such questions have not the slightest importance ; and it lies in our power, by intention and adoration, to turn anything we choose into the very living glory of Christ or Buddha. Only the intention, only the firm aspiration counts, and by this it is that faith moves mountains ; by this alone is perpetually renewed the perpetual mystery of transubstantiation in the Mass; by this alone the curved pig's bone of the Daladâ Mâligawa becomes efficacious to us as any actual bone of the Lord Buddha Himself. As little matters it what the substance of that bone may be as it matters to the communicant whether the baker has used black flour or white. It is in our hearts that all miracles are accomplished, and in our hearts alone that all relics become genuine and helpful.

And if thus envisaged, the cult of relics is seen not a folly, but yet another rung in humanity's upward ladder. For, setting other considerations aside now, any adoration —no matter how small or vile its object—is in itself a sanctification of the soul. Even a great evil love, disastrous and enchaining, has in it at least that one redeeming element ; for to adore is always to be sanctified—in a greater or a lesser degree, of course, following the quality of the adoration ; and even the being adored has also its uplifting force, developing latent good or its

possibility, where neither might otherwise have appeared for yet a very long time. Nothing utterly adored can ever be wholly bad; nothing utterly adoring can ever be beyond reach of holiness. And what one may adore, what one may worship, matters little, as I have said; what matters is the heart and faith with which one worships. Little doubt but that the Lord Buddha would discountenance the worship of His relics for themselves. But in their cult, as symbols of the straining love, the devotion, the clear, clean longing of the worshippers, He sees nothing that is not salutary and beautiful for those who worship.

It is not the holy person that one worships in His bones—it is the holiness behind him, the universal Divine holiness that *was* he. For to be Buddha is, in a sense, to be very God; since Buddhahood is that state where, at the end of an enormous process of development in wisdom, all taint of earthliness has passed finally away, leaving only—in a human form with inevitable human activities—the pure and unalloyed spirit of the Divine. And yet it is only as a symbol that the relics of the Buddha may fitly be worshipped, as helps recalling us to contemplation of that tremendous achievement to which also we ourselves must ultimately attain—and the quicker that by pure longing and holy living we strive upwards. It is not as a God's that the Buddha's relics are reverenced, but as means to assist in fixing our minds on God. It is not to devour the absolute good which we call God that we attend the Mass—to assimilate His strength as a savage that of a dead enemy—but to fill our souls with Him by fixing all our study on one of His representatives.

And therefore the cultivation of relics, the casing them in gold and jewels, is a vain folly, unless done in simple reverence for what they symbolize, not in any ostentatious

and material cult for the things themselves. Vain all anger against the wretched Hebrews who, for no irreverence, rejected the Host they had taken unawares; and vain especially the anger of monks and Abbot at the Daladá Mâligawa, when the King of Siam wished to take that curved bone in his hands and examine it. They stopped him with an absolute prohibition from laying a finger on that sacred thing; and the King, devoted benefactor of his faith, requited them, it is said, with equal anger, and carried away with him back to Siam all the rich gifts he had meant to lay on the shrine. And thus, from an undue false reverence for externals on the one hand, and from a natural unhappy yielding to wrath on the other, all the effect of the Relic was undone—ugly fantasies reigned in the stead of realities, and in that hour it was to King and monks and Abbot, with the holy Tooth in their hands, as if the Lord Buddha had never come nor passed, bequeathing the holy example that was the very soul and reason of His coming.

CHAPTER VI

GADALADÉNIYA AND PERADÉNIYA

IT is through the earliest chills of morning that one sets out from Kandy for the little Abbey of Gadaladéniya. Away up in the hills it lies, and the custom of the country forbids all travelling through the middle of the day. Therefore the fashion is to start on one's expeditions at five or six in the morning, and through the heat of mid-day to eat and sleep in rest-houses until four o'clock in the afternoon permits one to sally forth again into a refreshed world. So the quite small excursion to Gadaladéniya is made to swallow the whole of a day, and largely consists in the profitless process of heel-kicking in the veranda of a rest-house, fattening one's soul on derelict copies of the *Strand Magazine* or the *Windsor*.

I was lucky, however, for when the first stage of my journey was accomplished, and I descended to eat my breakfast at the rest-house of Peradéniya, almost opposite the gateway of the famous gardens, I found that the battered *Strands* were supplemented by a popular edition of "Northanger Abbey"; and, while the tea was making and bringing, I enjoyed a very blissful hour in the pump-room with dear Mrs. Allen and Isabella Thorpe. Here indeed was a strange place from which to visit Bath and hear of Dr. Skinner, "who went (you remember) to take the waters, and came away quite stout." The rest-house of Peradéniya lies embowered in greenery and countless

hanging pots of plant or fern—a low, squat, legless building, like all bungalows, nestling artistically into the coign of a slope. To look at from the hot dusty road it is a cool delicious aviary of delights, where the hearts of its many visitors should be as those of singing birds that have their nest in a watered shoot. In point of fact the Peradéniya rest-house belies its tranquil charm of appearance, and is an overcrowded, hackneyed lodging-place when you enter—a caravanserai whither everyone comes out from Kandy, four miles away, to sleep and study the gardens. Now, however, in earliest morning, the place is fresh and cool; heavy with dense dew is all the world, the plumage of hedge and palm and jungle drooping wet with moisture, and the whole air chill and virginal, filmed and enphantomed by vapours of soft azure. Everything is mysterious in the clear light through the celestial mist which is very depth of blue water made ethereal. Then comes the tea, and with it the only other inmate, it seems, of the rest-house—a stout person of mixed race in white ducks, who directs so bitter an eye on "Northanger Abbey" that he must clearly be its rightful possessor. So with a deprecating bow I lay the book down and go to eat my breakfast indoors. When I come back "Northanger Abbey" is gone; no sign is left—I am deep in Ceylon once more, far removed from all chance of discovering the memoirs of the wretched Matilda.

Then, having paid my little reckoning, the rickshaws are summoned, and I drive away up the white road in the first, followed by my servant in the other. He is here to-day to cope with the iniquities and frauds of the villagers, and to coerce the rickshaw coolies if these should prove refractory. Meanwhile, through a clean, cool silence we bowl on and on, up and down the vacant road as it

rises and falls over hill or valley. Up dense slopes of jungle we toil, hedged in by weight of massive foliage, where the nip of cold still lingers in the gloom, though beyond, in open spaces, the day is rapidly warming, and the clear sun plucking pitilessly at the films of the blue mist. Then from the rise we run swiftly down and through rich open hollows and flat lands, where the paddy-fields are still a-glimmer with the steamy vapour rising from their surface. Here, embedded in growth of palm and banana, huddle happily the little hovels that make a Cinhalese village, and supply all that humanity can want in this paradise. Then, over a broad modern bridge, magnificent in span of stone and iron, we cross the broad waters of Máhawéliganga, royal ubiquitous river of Ceylon, which seems to appear wherever you may go. Round by Kandy does it flow, and through the beautiful defile which is named for Lady Blake; then it loops acutely on itself as the Lune at its crook, though on a far vaster scale, and in the peninsula thus made has been established the botanical garden of Peradéniya. Even as we cross the bridge we can see its cultivated growth of innumerable palms and giant bamboos fringing the banks of Máhawéliganga as the river curls out of sight towards Kandy.

A profitable and splendid stream is Máhawéliganga: and a very holy too. For here, if the tale be true, lie tossed and ground for ever smaller in its currents the last fine dust that once made part of Siddharttha Sakhya-muni, who was Our Lord Buddha Gautama. For into Máhawéliganga, to be utterly lost, dispersed and cast away beyond recovery, did the Portuguese Bishop throw the ground powder of the sacred Tooth-Relic. So there the mortal dust of the Lord Buddha mingles with the sand, in bay and hollow of Máhawéliganga's bed, and no

difference or damage has thereby been made to His truth: for the body alike of saint and fool inevitably returns to the dust of which it was a mere temporary coalition; but not all the Bishops, nor all the diocesan congresses, nor all the œcumenical councils in the world could ever avail to disperse and cast away the perfect truth that is the eternal Buddha. Yet, though their action be itself empty and without result, yet for the intolerance and cruel intention of their deed those ill-fated ones who tried to dishonour the Relic must have their inexorable reward in added cruelty and added intolerance of spirit, which, being false emotions, and tied to the flesh, must bring them ever increased unhappiness and dis-ease through many successive stages of development, until they grow tired of self-inflicted bitterness, and so purge themselves by effort of their vice.

And still the white road winds and curls away amid the hills through deep darknesses of jungle, or through glaring open spaces of paddy. For now the day is well up; mists and damps and bluenesses have faded away. The sun is merciless and tyrannical, sucking up all humidity, cutting the world into black shadows and blaring lights. Then our way diverges from the main road, and takes to a tiny wheel-track, rough and difficult, up between high hills of grass and jungle. Progress here is matter of incessant hopping in and out; for, where a pair of Japanese 'kurumaya would have hauled one stalwartly along, the frailer Cinhalese agonize and groan over a rut no larger than a ruler, and give symptoms of such desperate effort that one must inevitably alight and tide them over that difficulty. Then one gets in again, only to repeat the process a moment later. However, though slowly, the ground is covered, and we gradually advance. Our next halt is made in a little village that nestles under

the dense shadow of the jungle on the steep slope of a hill. All round and overhead is a black canopy of leaves, through which a few rare rays of light come down like darting golden spears. Here are gathered a knot of palm-leaf huts, whose inhabitants turn out in multitude to greet us. Silent they appear, padding unsandalled over the soft bare earth. A loud clamouring ensues, my servant flying into histrionic wrath to vindicate my dignity, and, by reflection, his own. Here, it appears, I must alight finally, for the monastery of Gadaladéniya lies straight overhead now, on the summit of the hill, approachable only by a footpath.

Steeply up through the dark forest mounts the path at first, and most of the village accompanies me on my pilgrimage, following respectfully in the rear, marshalled by my servant, whose bulging gamp-like umbrella is his staff of office. Then the forest thins off, and we emerge into the sweltering glare of day. Up and up the slope we sweat, and only tangles of scarlet lantana now cover the hillside, until at last smooth rock appears above us. Worn, rounded planes of rock are these, grey, dark, and very ancient of appearance, rough in grain, yet smoothed by the infinite course of years and seasons across the unprotected summit of the hill. At one corner a flight of rude steps has been cut in the cliff, and up this we cautiously mount towards the twisted growth of trees whose branches we can see overhead. Then the slope ends, and we find ourselves on a wide open plateau of bare rock, rising and falling in domed lines on this side and on that. We stand beneath the shadow of a stout old temple-tree; its snow-white bark is gnarled and blistered with age; its growth grotesque, gnome-like, tempest-tossed, as that of the tree in Cruikshank's illustration to the story of the Goblin that stole a Sexton, in "Pickwick."

Rooted far down in some unguessed cranny of the rock, this aged offering thrives, with its fellows standing round, tossing wild knotted branches in a sweep to windward. Their stump-like sausage-fingers end all in a crown of waxen flowers; the air is thick and brilliant with their sweetness, and on the grey rock far and wide lie carpeted the fallen blooms, drifted, like creamy snow, on level spaces, or finding lodgment here and there on the ledges.

And their arching boughs make a frame to the monastery buildings just beyond. Poised on the topmost rocks stands Gadaladéniya, looking far and wide in all directions over Lanka and its mountains. Just beyond the temple-trees shines to the right its little white dâgaba, shrine of what sacred relic? what bygone saint or abbot? The small, bell-shaped building is covered by a pointed roof, supported at each corner on four stumpy round columns. And all—dâgaba and pillars—are whitened to a purity that almost blinds the eyes in that merciless white glare of sunlight on the naked rock plateau. Above the dâgaba waves a tall exquisite group of palms, and then, beyond, the Chinese bulk of the monastery buildings, the church, and the vihara, a concise, beautiful presence built up with columned portico, and upper galleries of carved wood. Another small building stands to one side, and, in the interspace, very far away, pale and clear in the uttermost distance, one soft blue jag of mountain stands up over many miles of hill and jungle.

Planted stark on the bare rock stands Gadaladéniya, approached over the undulating expanse of sun-flogged stone. Black in the glare falls the shadow of its projecting eaves, and the only spot of refuge is in the shelter of its porch, whence one looks back, through the pillars of carved stone, very fine and ancient, to the rise and fall of the plateau, the gleaming snow of the dâgaba, and its

GADALADÉNIYA: DÀGABA AND CHURCH.

cluster of palms to the left. In the foreground stands a monument, thick-graven with writing, to record some donation, some reformation, by some Cinhalese monarch. And that small dâgaba, sheltered by its canopy of four short pillars, may give us some faint idea of what must, in their time, have been the splendour of the ancient royal dâgabas of Thûparâma and Ambastâla, once encircled, each, by row upon row, and rank upon rank, of fine delicate pillars, capitalled with lacy carvings, that carried a complete arcaded gallery round the sacred dome itself.

But the measure of all this bygone opulence is the measure of the decay of Buddhism in Lanka. For Buddhism, as an official organism, shows less of its characteristic loveliness in Ceylon than in Japan, Burma, or Siam. It is never fair, indeed, to judge a religion by its aspect in a country where it has been, from its very beginning, the state-established cult. For thus, to some degree, authorized splendour usurps the place of private conviction, and the faithful follow at the bidding of their customs and their rulers rather than at any spontaneous command of the spirit. In Ceylon the public history of the Church has been too uniformly smooth. From the very first hour, from the conversion of Devanampiyatissa the King by the great priest-statesman Mahinda, son of Asoka, Prince Imperial of India, the entire nation rushed unanimously to the cult of the Buddha, His words, His works, His monks, His relics. And naturally, before very long, the monks and the relics became more important than the works and the ways. As observation and worship grew richer and more elaborate and more costly, so the inner spirit of the holy and humble faith began to fade from before men's eyes. Rich donations were made, rich abbeys founded ; King after King endowed his monastery ; King vied with King in the erection of enormous dâgabas

and shrines; Anuradhapura became the city of abbots rather than the city of saints.

And with wealth and worldly endowments came the coveting of wealth, and a grasping, worldly spirit. The vowed brethren of the Buddha, devoted to poverty, abstinence, learning, and good works, like the vowed brethren of that Western Bodhisat, Francis of Assisi, became ere long, like the Franciscans, rapacious, greedy, devoted to the acquisition and the retention of worldly riches. And, of course, this violation of their Founder's spirit was punished in the monks of Anuradhapura by the inevitable workings of Karma—that is, character. For charity failed among them, and sanctity vanished from before eyes that were set only on splendid edifices, and the bejewelling of a relic-case more richly than that of the rival abbey at Abhayagiriya or Jétavánarâma. Schisms arose, heresies, dissensions deep and bitter amongst brethren, who fought over documental points, while all alike were forgetting the soul of the Buddha.

It is only fair to say that no persecution ever arose, no such orgy of cruelty and wickedness as has always seemed inseparable from the disagreements of the Christian Church, whether in the streets and market-places of Rome, Alexandria, Byzantium, London, Paris, or Seville. Yet, though this greater guilt was spared, ugliness, aridness, and uncharity reigned amid the gorgeous dâgabas of Anuradhapura; and the more gorgeous grew the dâgabas, the poorer and drier in spirit grew their ministers. So that the long history of official Buddhism in Ceylon is the history of rivalries and schisms between the big abbeys, of decaying practice among their inmates, of Kings crippled and national development stifled by the dead-weight of an omnipotent Church, opposed, with all its volume (like all Churches inevitably all the world

over), to any advance in freedom or reflection among its subjects.

Attempts at reform of life and conduct show repeatedly the saddening state of things. Here and there a monarch, here and there a Primate, made brave efforts to reintroduce purity of heart into lives long made sodden with luxury, wealth, and worldly power. Even the Mahavansa, chronicled by a monk, wails again and again in no measured tones over the sloth, greediness, ignorance, and corruption of the Religious Orders; and yet, through all this turmoil, this hebetude of its ministers, the Truth had such power as never to fail in the heart of the people; and the sacred gift of happiness and simplicity of life that the Buddha's doctrine, rightly learned, can never fail to bestow on a nation, has never passed out of the grip of Lanka, whatever may have been the avarice and unworthiness of its interpreters. And now that clouds in east and west are clearing away from the sunlight of the Buddha, a higher aspiration is dawning amid the monks of Lanka, stripped now, for the most part, of the splendid endowments and rich acres that made so deadly a trap for their souls; for a formal Church established by the State is, *ipso facto*, disestablished, or soon to be disestablished, in the hearts of the people: a monk, no more than a man, can serve both God and mammon.

From Gadaladéniya there are yet more hill monasteries to be visited, and my little procession goes pattering down the steep slope again, and down the steps and down through the jungle. But first I am to see the shrine. The double doors are thrown open, and while one of my coolies acquires for himself merit by kneeling to repeat the Invocation, I peer into the dimness of the church to where, above His altar, piled with sweet flowers, red and yellow and creamy white, the golden face of the Buddha

smiles down out of the dusty vaulted darkness far overhead. Then the doors are closed, and I am taken up into the wooden gallery above that runs round the big bell in the tower. From here the eye roams freely over all the blue mountains, all the blue valleys, all the blue distances of Lanka; and so down from the tower again, across the hot expanse of rock, and into the dark jungle above the village, where the rickshaws are in waiting.

The track, though, from the village onwards grows ever more and more impossible, resembling rather the abandoned course of a beck than any decent path. I am for ever being turned out to walk, until ultimately I desist from the effort to do anything else, and stroll on ahead of the coolies along the sun-baked flanks of the hills, about which winds the way, in and out of coppice and open down. Now it is a bosky tangle of Lantana that one skirts—repetition of many a briar-scrub by an English highway-side, except that here the scarlet stars of Ixora, gem of our stoves, riotously takes the place amid the brushwood of *Rosa canina* or *Rosa arvensis*. Thence we pass into a deep dell of shade, up over a stony way, flanked by enormous boulders draped in fern and creeper, overarched by the impenetrable gloom of many palms and great dense evergreens. Here in the shade the air hangs heavy and warm as still warm water, thrilled from time to time by the tense fragrance of some invisible flower. At one moment comes a long breath of Narcissus, that carries one straight on wings to the flat, broad marsh-lands round Pégomas; then the sweet lances of Gardenia pierce the senses until they swoon in delight; and then in a flood a hot, hard wave of primrose, soft and overpowering—and in a moment I am facing the long thousand-foot slope across from Stainforth, all sulphury from crest to base with a uniform cloud of that palest green that any flower

wears. Whatever they may be, wherever they may be, these censers of the jungle, tiniest bunches of microscopic blossom, pale inconspicuousnesses along the ground, they carry in their hearts all the scents of the flowers one knows of old, from the Rose Maréchal Niel to the pure pungence of Lily of the valley. Even so do the sweet orchids all mimic some well-known scent. *Oncidium tigrinum* is very essence of roses, and *Miltonia phalænopsis*, from one bloom, will fill a whole house with lilies of the valley. Nature, like an economical writer of books, repeats her best effects in volumes which she is sure will only be read by different sets of readers. Unfortunately, we upset her plans by our habit of travelling from country to country, and thus detecting all her prudent artifices.

But now the path is coming utterly and obviously to an end—at least, there is no possibility of wheeling a rickshaw along this shelving ledge. I am quite alone now in the heart of the sunlight, far ahead of my following. About me lies open ground, pervaded with the brilliant hush of tropical noonday. Big butterflies flicker amid the flowers, and now and then a bird calls from the jungle beyond in a cool sweet repetition of notes, like water dropping from on high into a musical silver jug. An utter basking silence holds the world, and all the lovely distance lies dreaming in the blue heat far and very far away amid the hills. Then a rumour of war floats up into the stillness, drawing nearer round the bend by which my followers should approach. They heave at last into sight, gesticulating passionately, and all talking at once. The rickshaw coolies are resentfully jerking their rickshaws over the ruts between declamations. The accompanying throng of idlers contributes animatedly to the conversation. Ahead of all marches my servant, clothed in offended dignity, clutching the gamp in folded arms,

and occasionally breaking his gloom by a brief barking objurgation cast back over his shoulder at the coolies, who thereupon vociferate more furiously than ever in a flickering spirt of protest. Apparently, as far as I can gather, he has been vindicating my majesty by insisting on sitting in his rickshaw and being pulled over even the worst gullies of the road, with the result that his wretched coolie not unnaturally upset him into a ditch, sprained his thumb, and broke the umbrella.

Though the rickshaw, too, is badly damaged, it is the affront to the umbrella that obviously rankles deepest. "My umbrella broke, my umbrella broke!" he repeats, with mournful indignation, and I gather that he is threatening the coolies with many pains and penalties, and mulcting in the rich backsheesh that otherwise my majestic magnanimity would have assuredly poured forth. This I infer from the embittered gloomy looks they cast on me, and the pantomime in which they try to show me how the servant's weight made the catastrophe inevitable. However, from all this turmoil I and the umbrella are to be the principal sufferers; for the end of the dialogue, I find, is that the coolies discover—or, at all events, assert immovably—that I cannot possibly be got across certain sudden floods and shoals and shallows and other obstacles of Nature which intervene between me and Lankatílŏka, the Jewel of Lanka—that mountain monastery which I had sallied forth thus early especially to visit, and to see which I had covenanted with them for a fare which, even to a neophyte like myself, in a country where a farthing goes further than sixpence in less favoured lands, had seemed exorbitant. And, since these floods are here, why did they contract to take me to Lankatílŏka? I depute my servant to argue this point, to plead, to convince. He refers bitterly to the umbrella, and then addresses the

coolies in torrents of Cinhalese exhortation and invective. Perfectly useless: they remain inexorable, and are clearly masters of the situation, servant or no servant. Only remains to put up patiently with the annoyance, and make shift with the lovely memory of Gadaladéniya.

Anyhow, it appears there is another monastery further on, which it will edify me to visit. There is no longer any question of using the rickshaws, so they are left by the trackside, while I trudge onwards, preceded by the wrathful form of my servant, holding the now headless umbrella to his breast in the cross-armed fashion of Mr. Punch. Very, very long, and very, very bare, and very, very open is the way to this monastery ; and when ultimately I arrive there, molten as Niobe, dropping fatness like the clouds, or the wings of ill-starred Ikaros, I find a square building, perfectly modern, and rather like a small French hotel, squatting under the lee of a vast grey rock. Overhead at the back rises a mountain slope of precipice and jungle. In front is a drying-ground, where the yellow robes of the monks are exposed. Everything is bald and new and glaring—very appealing as an example of how piety and enthusiasm are once more spreading in Ceylon, but very unrewarding as a spectacle, after so arduous a traipse through the glare.

I never even discovered the name of this foundation. I made one or two half-hearted efforts to do so, but everybody in Kandy so sniffed when they heard I had visited it, and so scoffed at its claims to any such an honour or trouble, that I soon was glad to dismiss the whole matter with a lofty contempt. I remember there was a small white shrine, like a magnified dog-kennel, on an exposed terrace. Into the blackness of this I peered, to see at the end a gaudy painting of the Mahaparinibban of Our Lord Buddha, while around the colossal reclining

effigy wandered a frieze of saints and Bodhisats, marching one by one, in profile, Egyptian in crude treatment, and in the convention that so dwarfed them by the side of the central figure of the composition. Windowless was this sanctum, and its altar-slab was piled with scented flowers. And then, to my horror, I was aware of an aged monk extended in meditation on a long plank bed. Hastily, and with a feeling of irreverence, I retreated, closing the door, and leaving him to his ecstasy in the darkness, over the Great Light of his contemplation.

So I make my long way back to the rickshaws, and thence back to the village, and thence back to the highway. At one stoppage in the jungle I am bade alight, and sit in a kitchen-chair, hurriedly produced from the recesses of a small house by the track-side, while an attendant shins up a palm-tree and brings me down a cocoanut. In a square, with four sure strokes of a knife, they hack a lid in the crown of the big green nut, like the seed-vessel of a hyacinth multiplied by twenty, and hard as leather. Then they lever off the cap thus hewn, and offer me to drink of the milk that one sees lying pure and cold and clear at the heart of the fruit. In that hermetically-sealed well the liquid is always cool as iced water, and on a hot jungle day refreshes one far more than its intrinsic qualities would make one hope—a pallid drink by itself, mere water faintly sweet and insipid. Then we continue our way through the forest to the highway, and so back over hill and valley to Peradéniya.

Vast is the acreage of Peradéniya Garden, and gorgeous is its vegetation. One may walk or drive for hours along its avenues and circuits, seeing fresh marvels everywhere. First object of the visitor's curiosity is the spice alley, where you tread a path between trees of all the world's famous spices. Here is clove, and here is cinnamon, to

be seen and handled in leaf and bark; here, amid their dark foliage, lurk the juicy walnuts that we only know in a very different state. For, husk these fruits of their lush green envelope, and you find a ramification of red filaments and threads, reticulating round an inner kernel of white flesh. This envelope is mace; the kernel beneath is nutmeg; and the sudden pungency of their fragrance carries one far away to the kitchens of one's childhood, and all the joys associated with nutmeg, when one used through exquisite hours to grind chocolate upon its grater. Rough, too, as a nutmeg-grater, says the simile, and there is something august about being brought face to face with the actual visible fact which has given birth to a simile that passes current among all the Anglo-Saxon races. And what the benighted Slavs and Latins have in its place I do not know, though assuredly even they must rejoice in the nutmeg, whatever parabolic uses they may or may not make of the implement that serves them as its grater.

Then there are the bamboos of Peradéniya, whose portraits everyone sends on postcards to his sisters and his cousins and his aunts. These are monstrous glories, too large for the known names Arundinaria, Phyllostachys, Bambusa. They are Thalamochortos and Gigantochloa—giant grasses, indeed, for they make the greatest of bamboos into silly couch-grass, abject and unnoticeable—towering for more than a hundred feet, in forests more than a hundred feet through, of thigh-thick culms, springing densely from the central crown, and arching far and wide their tremendous canopy of plumes. Beneath their shadow forest-trees become saplings, and man is dwarfed to an inconsiderable pigmy. There is something almost depressing about their reckless enormousness, for one loses all sense of scale; old landmarks shift, and the

boundaries of existence waver. One cannot look on them as big species of bamboo; they seem just ordinary bamboos, and it is we that have shrunk—so monstrously, so inhumanly shrunk—to mere emmets. They give the effect of a nightmare, these giants; one hopes to wake in a moment and find oneself the proper size again, and these plumy tufts thereby reduced to their proper proportions. One shuts one's eyes and opens them in hope to work the miracle, and feels that one has unwittingly eaten too much from the wrong side of Alice's mushroom.

And then, after the bamboos, one comes upon the palms. There are palms here in every shape, size, height, and grace—palms solid and fanlike, palms feathery, palms light and filmy as torn cloud; the king-palm of all palms is the sacred talipot. The talipot will only abide the cool mountain slopes of the hills about Kandy—a thing like a gigantic Latania, carrying a hundred enormous leaves, pleated and fanlike, as the crown of a great trunk like the column of a cathedral. From this magnificence there springs in the course of years a spouting fountain of snow, larger and more weighty in its opulent volume than even the capital of leafage from which it goes spraying heavenwards. After this the day of the talipot is over: as the blossom droops and its fountain runs dry, the talipot dies, never to recover. Here, at Peradéniya, they spoil the talipot's effect by arranging their specimens in an avenue, which prevent you from getting any idea of the isolated splendour of the plant as you see it on the Kandyan slopes. And such a feature is always fifty times more effective in isolation than when spoiled by repetition in formal lines and masses, whether straight or curved.

But the talipot has another value. It stands high among economic plants, and its fronds have a rare durability. Indeed, they are indestructible, and on dried leaves of the

talipot are written all the most ancient scriptures, all the histories and legends of the Lord Buddha. And of these, the most ancient, preserved to our own day, are contemporary, in all likelihood, with the last life of Our Lord on earth. The fronds were cut, the ink was ground, the evangel written far away back in the ages, either when the Most Perfect One still actually walked the world, or so soon after His Mahaparinibban that His bodily relics were hardly yet cool from the pyre of Kusinara. Such is the endurance of the holy talipot—firmer even than that of the papyrus. The monks, again, turn the huge palm to another use. For a frond is cut, bunched at either end, and so sewn up that the result is a vast shallow boat or basket. And thus the monks carry it as a parasol and umbrella. In old royal days of Lanka, when etiquette ruled, and the Kings had their privileges of which they were as jealous as the Byzantine Emperors of their purple ink, the carrying of the talipot with its honourable end forwards was forbidden to all save kingly personages, until the right was also extended to the monks throughout the island, raising the meanest hedge-brother then to an equal condition with that of Maha Séna or Elala, lords in Lanka.

And then there are many marvels more in Peradéniya —golden Allamandas and Bignonias making cataracts of yellow from the tallest trees ; gnarled ancient specimens of banyan, weeping great grey branches to root again in earth ; that glorified wistaria (*Petræa volubilis*), twining up and up, with big lacy leaves like a pepper's, to burst at last into thousands upon thousands of loose bloom-spikes, where the small flower, of deepest, darkest, velvety violet, is contained in a wide, starry calyx of pure lavender-blue. Something of a transcended lilac's charm they have, these showers of blue and purple, and something of the wistaria's;

and the beauty of both combined. But at last, in despair of ever seeing Peradéniya completely, I give up the struggle, realizing that the human brain, through its eye, is only capable of seeing and assimilating a very small number of objects on a given occasion before growing weary, overstrained, and unprofitable as a record. So, as evening draws on, the rickshaws are hauled to the tall iron gates of the garden, and I start on the final four miles of smooth high-road that lie between Peradéniya and Kandy. Beneath tall spreading trees, shaped like vast deciduous cedars of a far brighter green, the road spins on to Kandy. All along the highway-side are huts and shops and houses and bungalows, brimmings-over from the town that continue Kandy to the very gates of Peradéniya. A bustle of activities, even in the twilight, is this Peradéniya road—sordid and banal despite its beauty. Here there are convents and schools and drink-shops; here all sects have their seat; and here one holy soul, at least, sanctifies the place.

Perhaps you may see her going abroad in her covered cart whose bullock's silver bell is haunted by happy memories—the gentle saint of the Peradéniya road; the wise and learned lady who has taken, long since, her refuge in the Way, and now, a shaven-headed nun of the Yellow-robe, keeps a school and hostel for aged Buddhist nuns half-way to Kandy. Cool and quiet are her precincts, easily to be discovered. Any may enter in and find her teaching among her children or reading with her sister-nuns. When first I visited her I could not but marvel at the faces of her sisterhood, so strong and manlike were they, the betraying hair being removed. One indeed, I remember, hawk-like, aquiline, full-blooded, the very face of a strong man and a priest—the face of some mighty prelate of the Italian Renaissance (notably, I now remem-

ber, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza). And then, by the wall that day, there crouched a toothless, aged rag of womanhood, with wispy grey hair all adrift, chewing her jaws perpetually in the mechanical munching of senility. But even she, when I asked her destiny, was one who had at last, through study, found the great peace. Her age was ninety-three, and, on the next full-moon day, having thoroughly mastered, embraced, and adored the principles of the Faith, she was to shave her head and take the final vows. And accordingly, when next I saw her, the sunken old face had changed, the dull senility disappeared; instead I saw calm, resolute, ecstatic lines, and the beatitude of one who has found and recognized the treasure of life. And so, having seen happiness, we pass out from the nunnery, first of its kind now for centuries, since Anula the Princess sought admittance to the Rule, and was received by the Lady Sanghamitta in royal Anuradhapura 300 years before Christ. For nunneries died ultimately out of degenerating Lanka, and the hostel of the Peradéniya Road is the first opening of an old gate long closed up and rusted over.

PART II

THE EIGHT DAYS' ODYSSEY: FROM KANDY TO THE SACRED CITY

CHAPTER VII

MÂTALÉ, ALUVIHÁRA, NÁLANDA, DAMBÛLLA

VERY far away in the north lies the Sacred City; between Kandy and Anuradhapura stretch some five-and-eighty miles of mountain, plain, and jungle, all in their time rich territory of peasant, prince, or abbot, but now a mere Sargasso-sea of vegetation. And the question for one at Kandy is of how best to get thence to Anuradhapura. One may descend by train to Polgarahawela, at the foot of the mountains, and there change into another train, which will ultimately carry you through the very precincts of Toluvila Vihara into the station of modern Anuradhapura. Or else, if one wills (and can afford extortionate rates), one may charter a motor and go roaring down the long quiet road through the jungles until, in five stupefying barren hours or so, the sacred destination is reached. But, by thus greedily devouring space and time, Old Ceylon is left neglected all along the right and left of your way. For off the high-road between Kandy and Anuradhapura lie the most imposing skeletons of the Cinhalese kingdom — Aluvihára, Nálanda, Dambûlla, Sigiri, Kalavewa, Awkana—not to mention, down a long side-road, remote and remote in the uttermost distance

of the jungle, the fair, broad waters of Minneri, the green, lotus-choked expanse of Topavewa, and all that is left from the royal city of Polonnarua.

Therefore, my ultimate decision was to drive the long way by stages, resting here and resting there, and seeing, as I went, all that offered itself to be seen. For, indeed, in this country such a leisurely progress alone is in keeping with the ancient placidity of the place, and a proper absorption of bygone splendours. Accordingly, I chartered a carriage from Mâtalé, and was to take the course in some eight days. For if Sigiri adds twenty miles and a night to one's journey, the divagation to Polonnarua adds another fifty miles and full three nights. The horses, in this heat, go very slowly, too; they needs must start at six in the morning, trail through their task until they reach the next rest-house about ten, there repose for four or five hours, and then continue the way till early evening sees them arriving at the next rest-house of the stage. These invaluable rest-houses of Government are planted along the road at firm intervals of fourteen miles, and there the weary may find cheap entertainment at the hands of the State, and, incidentally, contribute to the prosperity of the rest-house keeper by paying sixpence for every addition to the comfort afforded by four bare walls, a floor, and a roof.

Through an afternoon of rich blue and gold did I descend by train through the Kandyan mountains to Mâtalé, the starting-point of my journey. There, having been welcomed by my kindly host, I sallied forth to visit Aluvihára, that very sacred and storied monastery where lived and worked the famous layman scholar Buddhaghosa, who commentated all the Canon, and rendered it into Pali from the scripture of Mahinda, and with such authority that, though but a layman, his work is still held of supreme

authority. And so, at my host's door, I first set eyes on the carriage which was to be my moving tent for the next eight days. Farewell, in that moment, to my dreams of an open vehicle like a victoria; for here was a stout roofed shandrydan, with seats back to back and a canopy over all. It was drawn by a pair of horses, one large and black and bony, the other small and white and, by comparison, plump. So in this I bowled away down the long, shaded road to where, about a mile or so beyond Mâtalé, a footpath diverges to the left, leading you among the rocks to Aluvihára.

Beneath the golden gloom of the boughs the little track winds upwards towards more open ground; and then, amid the verdure, the boulders leap into sight—enormous cliffs and peaks, into which huddle and cling the buildings of the dwindled monastery that was once a vast abbey of students in Buddhaghosa's time, while Mahanama was King, about the date of Hypatia's martyrdom. Between two vast blocks of stone lies a small alley-way, and on either side are carved into the living rock the church and monastic dwellings of Aluvihára. At the farther end a flight of rock-cut steps goes winding upwards among the boulders to where, on the topmost pinnacle, a small snow-white dâgaba is perched. Down below, in the gulf of the rocks, all is quiet twilight; but the fire of the setting sun is full on the dâgaba, transforming its whiteness to a golden-rosy flame of light. From its narrow platform one looks down over all the undercliff of blocks about its base—landslip, in days long beyond memory, from the spur of mountain that rises high behind Mâtalé. Long beyond memory indeed; for here the vihara has crouched and perched for centuries beyond count, far back into the very dawn of our own era and beyond. Specially sacred to the early monks of both Buddhism and Christianity

were these fortuitous jumbles of rock and natural caverns. Here were houses not made with hands—dwelling-places ready formed, and amply sufficient for the leading of a holy life that only called for bare shelter from wind and rain. In every direction lie heaped and piled the boulders of Aluvihára, like house-blocks fallen undamaged. Here they lean up against one another, or lie prone, or stand at a drunken tilt over the winding track below. Everywhere, in all their angles and crannies, spring trees, shrubs, flowers, and tiny bushes. One tall palm stands placid sentry at the top of the steps that bring you up into the alley of the church and the vihara. Just beyond, at the end of this gully, are more monastic buildings clinging to the stone, and two vast blocks leaning against each other, and leaving only the smallest rift of light through their cavernous recess. And this cleft is the home of Aiolos and all his children—very palace of all winds that blow, it seems, filled for ever with a sleepless cold whistling, intermixed with a dim murmur of rustling movement. But the causes of all this are a million million bats that cling and shrill and bicker eternally in their bunches, changing and reforming, scattering and reuniting, in a hundred grotesque dark huddles, like monstrous fungoid growths, or masses of fruit, black-rotten, hanging from the darkness of the inmost clefts.

Mâtalé itself is a quiet, lovely place in the twilight. One long village street it has, lined with shops that almost all offer mummified fishes in various forms and stages. But above the noisy activities of this lies a broad open space of smooth green—a playground, with a club-house. Feathery trees, like some dream-blend of larch and tamarisk, encircle this, and far above, in the still air of evening, stand up the smooth, beautiful slopes of the high peaks that rise to the back of Mâtalé. On

their summits appear perched here and there the bungalows of planters, for all this country of the hills is the paradise of tea and rubber and their cultivators. Beyond the mountains, throughout the enormous level tract of plain that fills all Northern Ceylon, the tea grows savourless and without value; only here in the mountain air does it thrive and repay the grower. Mâtalé itself has its long scattered bungalows, each embedded in the greenery of its garden; and the whole town, with its houses sprinkled sporadically, lies embowered in delicate, beautiful growth of palm and bread-fruit and bamboo, with many another tree. So green, so placid is Mâtalé, so English is the broad leisureliness of its playground, that one might here fancy oneself back on one of our own village greens, but that the air is still and warm and fragrant, with a warmth and a fragrance that are never carried on England's nipping breezes.

At Mâtalé, too, one sees one's last of the cotton-tree in flower. The cotton-tree, glory of the hill country, rises tall and bare, columnar and silvery as the trunk of a beech. The broad flat sweep of its branches is thrown out far overhead, and they stand naked at their time of flowering—yet not naked, for they are clothed from end to end with huge blossoms of an ardent crimson, in shape recalling some magnified edition of a Pyrus japonica, or even more closely Camellia japonica. And these great ruby flowers are like the camellia, too, in their fall, for they drop in showers and litter the ground at the tree's base with a carpet of perfect corollas. After the flowers are gone, in their place is formed a fat green pod, and this, as it swells and bursts, reveals a dense volume of fine wool or cotton, of which the Cinhalese and Europeans make much use; for, although it will not spin into a thread, it proves invaluable for stuffing of cushions and chairs. Then, after flowers and fruit, appear at last the

leaves. The cotton-tree is curiously Japanese in convention; still and tall it stands up on the hillside, pre-eminent in height, pre-eminent in stiff archaic grace, its flat spread of branches loaded and lurid with crimson—very living reproduction of some decorative tree in a frieze of Okio. It is, in general effect, Nature's copy of a Japanese painter's work, Nature's adoption of Japanese hints; for it is at once cherry, pyrus, and camellia: cherry in its profusion of blossom on naked stem, pyrus in shape of blossom, and camellia in size and colour. There is a big tall colony of specimens that no one will ever forget, standing stark and high against the livid deep green of the crowded hillside, as you drive up from the station to the lake at Kandy. From the lake's edge, as one looks back into the west, their hard, unreal exquisiteness of line is what makes the beauty of that particular view—tier on lacy tier of scarlet and silver against the sunset, or against the sombre verdure of the slopes.

But amid the groves of Mâtalé in the gloaming shines many a beautiful shrub and flower. Below the green lies a network of country lanes, like so many country lanes of England; and beyond these, open to the wayfarer, a sort of public garden, a territory of rocks and grassy slopes and rare, delicate trees. Here the bushes are studded with blossoms of gold or purple; here little unknown lilac stars are a-twinkle in the grass; and up and down, in valley or on upper slope, like daffodils in a Westmoreland field, there shine the yawning crimson trumpets of the amaryllis, which here runs riot as a daffodil—absurdly glorified narcissus, too, in its general effect, but startling in the paradoxical effulgence of its colour. In the late twilight all tone seems to be dying out of the blanched, bloodless world; greys and blacks have taken the place of blues and greens; the trees, in their many shades, are leaden now

in a monochrome of dull darkness; the sandy roads gleam white and ghostly; blossoms pink and golden are turned pallid and colourless. But as night sinks heavily down, obliterating the brightnesses of day, all the colour that has ebbed from hill and tree and flower seems to be concentrated in those ferocious trumpets of amaryllis, so like husky hot fires do they glow and burn and flame obscurely through the dark, starring the grey grass, the grey gloom beneath the greying trees. They are the last to go, theirs the last colour that yields to night. Slowly, when all else has faded, their scarlet deepens and their fire grows dark in tone, until at last their incandescence has sunk into a velvety black; and by that time night is queen in the world, and an immortal stillness holds all the country of the hills.

Through the clear nip of a sparkling morning, chilly yet with dew but half-dispelled by a sun not old enough to realize his power, the shandrydan drives out of Mâtalé, along the soft, silent roads through the jungle. The green everywhere is bright and glittering with freshness, and the air has the frosty, rich tranquillity of a fine sunrise in early English November. So by degrees as we go the heat of day increases, and the dawn-freshness gives place to the ardour of tropical day. On rolls the road, and on, and on, offering no incident as it passes through endless jungle, with scanty intervals of clearing. For some time after we pass Aluvihára all is forest and dense shade, in which the air is even cold. But then we drive through clearings, past groves of stumpy tea-bushes, where Camellia thea is perpetually forbidden to hang out her lovely bells of waxy snow, past stretches of cultivated land, past the raw desolation of a whole hillside denuded, to give place for the ugly little spindly saplings of rubber, frail and mean in growth. But as we go the hills

diminish, and from ranges and ridges occur only in isolated plinths and pinnacles. We are driving down from the mountain country into the vast plain that occupies three-fourths of Ceylon, and at every yard we are leaving the ugly, alien activities of to-day, and moving on into the no-man's-land of jungle, where every yard is haunted by ghosts and memories of Lanka. And so at last our first stage of fourteen miles is accomplished, and we wheel into the compound of the rest-house at Nálanda.

One would need a Homeric or a Shakespearean voice to sing adequately the charms of Nálanda, for in such a bower, surely, must Calypso have lived, in such a forest have wandered the exiled company of "As You Like It." The rest-house at Nálanda is a low, open bungalow, nestling amid greenery, beneath the golden twilight that filters through the boughs of enormous ancient tamarind-trees, whose intertwining branches make an emerald canopy very far overhead, through which pierces the delicate filigree of sunshine. The little place has an immemorial tranquillity and beauty far more refreshing than any luxury of civilization. In the palpitating heat this fresh hollow of fine shade and shelter is a cavern of coolness, in whose green calm one feels intensified the reverberating fury of the heat-waves outside, even as, in some sea-cavern of quietness, far down, might one have a redoubled appreciation of the furious tempest raging overhead. No storm, we feel, no heat, no wrath of Nature, could ever disturb the peace of this holy shade; it is inviolable, the sanctuary of peace and rest—fitter site for a monastery than for a rest-house. And here, rusted into the rambling roots of a tamarind, is a reminder of the outer world that sets the last fine edge on our contentment. This is the moulded ancient barrel of a cannon—a thing almost prehistoric in the antiquity of its aspect,

grey, crusted, shapeless, indistinguishable amid the roots of the tree. It has some history and some romance, that reminder of storms and uglinesses ; but here, in the calm of Nálanda, one cannot trouble to recollect with whom it came, or when : on what fierce expedition, or in what weary retreat. It stands here only as the one discordant note needed to make perfect the harmony of the whole, and the very trees themselves have made their effort to obliterate the thing and incorporate it with themselves.

But not even here in Nálanda is there rest for the dutiful. Apparently there is a sight to be seen, and a courteous guide to expound it ; so, while the horses are browsing on the short grasses in the compound beneath the grateful shade, we must needs sally forth again on to the highway, into the blazing sun. Like a blow comes the glare of midday as one leaves the green twilight of the wood, and then there follows a hundred yards or so of breathless white road, after which we diverge to the right, through slough and coppice of lantana, to pursue a blazing track between two hedges of that same lantana, whose weedy growth and heads of orange and scarlet verbenas are everywhere to be seen in Ceylon—an alien which has taken so kindly to the soil that now all concerned in its introduction are repenting their rashness. So the way winds on and on, and the pitiless sun beats down, and the motionless air between those walls of lantana throbs and throbs again with waves of heat. Then we come to a wooded space, and then to deep jungle, amid which nestles a little native village. After this the path leads out again into the coppice of lantana, soon to abandon even this frail pretence of covert, and to march out upon open naked fields. The country here is cultivated, excavated, denuded—a small, flat plateau clothed in grass and flowers. Beyond it stands up into the blue a

towering mountain peak, all crag and precipice, rising abruptly and in perfect isolation from the plain-lands at its feet. And now we are upon trenches and earthworks, all overgrown with lush herbage. In the very middle of the flat rises in the centre of these entrenchments the rectangular foundations and the one standing gable of the Gédi-Gé.

Whose or what the Gédi-Gé of Nálanda may ever have been I believe no one yet accurately knows. It is a strange little pathetic building, whether palace or temple. Still to be discerned, though all choked with weeds, is the square of the design, and the naos and the portico. One end alone is still standing, and the courses of the wall are diversified with little carven heads in stone. All around lies a jostle of fallen wreckage—some cleared and cleaned in the course of excavation, the rest making mere humps of grass beneath the green vesture in which the centuries have clothed them. At its wall stands a dark evergreen tree, and lantana sprouts from its crannies. Beyond its gable shoots up to heaven the soaring line of the mountain a short mile or two away; and the ruin, with all its earthworks, lies forlorn in the midst of that broad flat clearing of the jungle which so long concealed it. Now the Mahavansa records that King P'rakram' Bahu the Great had built him a fortress near the village of Nálanda in the days when he was fighting towards the sovereignty of Lanka; but whether that Nálanda were the same as this, and whether this Gédi-Gé be the fortalice of P'rakram' Bahu the Great, it would need a more learned wit than mine to discern. In any case, this desolation has its plan, and was once a building of wide extent, for all the little relic that is still standing; and the elaboration of its stonework shows that it was no common erection, but the design of some illustrious personage.

From the Gédi-Gé we wend our hot way back to Nálanda, there to lunch and cool ourselves in the blessed shade. And so delicious is this place, that two o'clock has arrived long before I am aware, and with two o'clock the harnessing of the horses and the continuance of our journey. So I take my grateful farewell of Nálanda, and then out once more on to the high-road, to course slowly, interminably, along between the hedges of lantana, in which, at rare intervals, flashes and flames the vermilion-orange of Gloriosa—climbing caricature of *Lilium pardalinum*, which looks as if it had had its petals crimped with a hot iron, after the barbarous and hideous method in which a plaice is made presentable at the tables of the truly refined.

It is early evening before our way suddenly brings us upon some enormous domes of black rock, smooth and sheer and rounded, rising up and up above the green unity of the jungle. We are arriving at Dambûlla, famous place of the temples carved in the living rock. At the rest-house here I am to spend the night, and then, to-morrow, take a short stage on down the by-road that leads to Sigiri. Meanwhile, the first thing to be done is to visit the rock temples before twilight; accordingly, a pert showman is chartered, and I set off back along the high-road to where the path leads up the smooth slope of the mountain. As I go the guide enlivens my path by recitals of how, at that very spot, a wild elephant erupted a year before from the jungle upon two sportsmen, and trampled on one of them, while the other ran up a tree and shot it.

Turning aside from the road, the path to the temples diverges up the very face of the bare stone slope. The incline is fairly steep, but the rock surface is gritty, offering sure foothold, so that the ascent is amusing to anyone who has played among the rickety plateaus of the scar limestone. At midday, of course, under the sun, this naked, refracting

surface of rock is unbearable; but towards evening one mounts at one's leisure, the air is gentle, and the memory of bygone heat only lends tranquillity to the atmosphere. And still the ascent goes mounting, mounting, over bare stone towards the crest of the hill, yet far above. And, as one goes, the jungle opens before us to north and south. Looking out over the weed-tangled slant of the rock, one gazes to the left, down into the heart of the mountain country and the great coronet of blue jagged peaks in the distance that shelter Kandy. To the north there is mere jungle for ever and ever, broken only by here and there an isolated hill, and by the broad desolation, far away, of the Sacred City. The slope of rock is feathered here and there with herbage; here and there a satin-wood tree, lacy, fine and frail, springs from a crevice; over the slanting ridges go browsing black and tawny cows, hump-backed and strange. The effect is strangely familiar, though, and with an effort one realizes that this scene is one from the topmost flat levels of the scar-limestone, only set at an extreme, unnatural tilt by some cataclysm of Nature.

So one reaches the summit of the open slope, and thence up steep, stony steps, through coppice and jungle, towards the crest of the hill. Suddenly one debouches on this. More bare rock, a portico, and then a long frowning cliff beyond, with a broad ledge before it, and then another cliff, dropping away to the plain and jungle beneath. The ledge is flooded now by the westering sun, in whose rays the overhanging brow of rock above is luminous and brilliant. Beneath the cliff runs an arcade, rickety and wooden, with doors opening here and there into the core of the living rock. Here are the rock temples of Dambûlla, famous and sacred from the dim ages of history; for it was here during a Tamil invasion that King Vatta

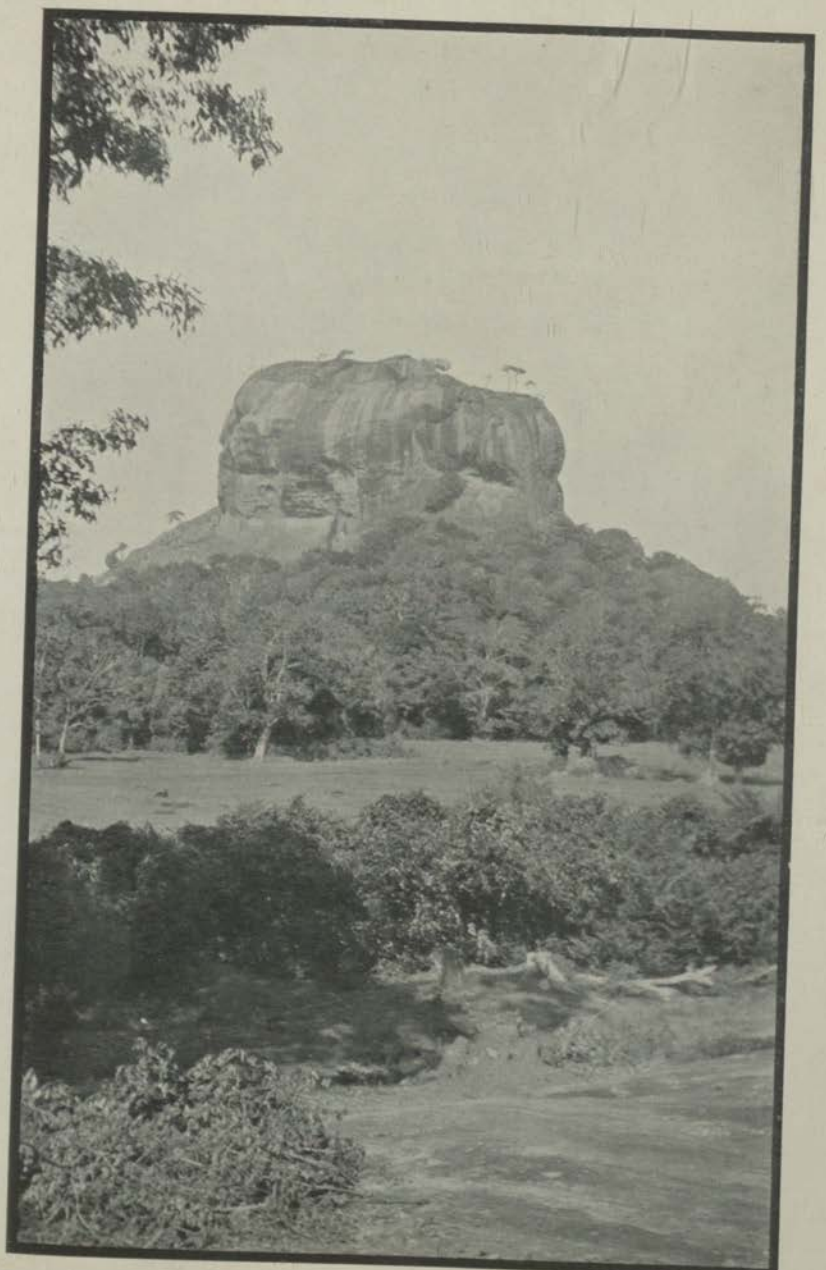
Gamini took refuge in the first century before Christ; and the foundation of the monastery dates from his visit, though the prominent inscriptions that are visible on the cliff date only from the time of that mighty builder, King Nissanka Malla, whose reign of nine years seems to have been mainly taken up with public works, to judge by the prevalence of his inscriptions. He reigned while the barons were wringing the Great Charter from King John, and added mightily to the glory of Pulatthi, which is the city of Polonnarua.

Now, while we await the monk in charge with his key, it is well to look back from this exalted plateau before we pass through the gate onto the walled ledge, perhaps twenty yards broad, that is the temenos of the temples. For here, from this high place, we look northwards and southwards over all the jungle and all the mountains. Far south, in range after range, peak behind peak, lies unfolded in blue and soft purple the mountain country of Kandy. Far north, in film after film of one indistinguishable plain, stretches the vast *æquor* of the jungle; for, indeed, seen from here, the jungle is seen a sea—one perfectly level tideless flood of green, stretching away, without eddy or crest, without a break, into the utmost distances until it only disappears with the curve of earth itself. Here and there from its unperturbed surface rise azure islands of hill—precipitous isolated peaks that tower abruptly from the plain. The effect is of a magic scene, where an archipelago of sapphire stands up from the unrippled levels of a sea that some magician has transformed into verdure, or perhaps from water so thick with green growth that no more water is perceptible, and the whole clogged expanse is an impracticable floor of vegetation. Impressive always, and even terrifying, is this flat unity of the jungle when you see it from any high point. But

this view from Dambûlla Rock has the added force of surprise. It is unbelievable at first—too fantastic, too overpowering, too like a transformation scene, to be realized at the first glance.

And there, very far away over the unchanging surface, rises in the distance a long red bulk of rock, looking like a big pebble poised high on the surface of the tide. Rounded it is like shingle of the sea, and utterly alien from all the sharp craggy lines and pinnacles in which the islands of mountain break from the forest-levels. Now on its face, turned scarlet and golden in the sunset, above the hot golden-green of the illumined jungle, the eye can discern a line of white and ochre, raw-looking and artificial, as if the mass had been broken from its pedestal and then cemented on again. The red rock is Sigiri, haunted place of splendour, and the raw line marks the gallery of Kasyapa the King by which he would go up to the tremendous citadel, where he took vain refuge from his terrors.

Now the monk has come, and it is time to see the temples. So we pass the portico and enter the sacred enclosure before their doors. Slowly, with effort and clanking of bolts, the first shrine is opened, and we pass out of the sunset into the darkness that holds the heart of the cliff. The air is stiff and stale with dead flowers, incense, tallow. The blackness is intense after the daylight, and only after a pause can one accustom one's eyes to the test and begin to discern a vast something which occupies the gloom. Then the monk kindles a small guttering taper, and instantly a huge rounded bulk leaps into view, only a few yards visible at a time, as the light moves to and fro. Neither beginning nor end can we see of the dim presence that looms along before us, filling all the shallow stretch of the cave. Then, as the taper comes



SIGIRI ROCK.

and goes, gigantic limb and arm evolve from the mass—we begin to realize what this is. At last the light reaches the end of its journey. Far up in the darkness, smiling out over our heads, lies the face of the colossal recumbent statue. And now we are able to understand the whole, and trace each curve of the reclining effigy from shoulder to feet, although it is so vast that, in the murk, the whole can never be discerned at once. On His side lies Our Lord Gautama Buddha, gazing out far, far, far across the jungle beneath—gazing far and far indeed over all the Shoreless Sea of Birth and Death. For this is the image of the Perfect One in the moment of His Mahaparinibban, of the Great Entrance into Nirvana, when all trace of mortality was left behind eternally, when the flawless Divine entered on its perfect heritage of serenity everlasting. "For Siddhartha Sakhyamuni must pass away and disappear, but Gautama Buddha cannot pass away for ever." Very calm, then, fixed in the trances of the supreme hour, lies the apparitional mortal body of the Saviour, the Best Friend of All the World. From the cave of Dambûlla those quiet eyes gaze out and out across the waveless ocean of the jungle; the everlasting Peace is in them; there is nothing else now for all eternity that they can contemplate. Past, ended, and dismissed is that final earthly life which was wholly lived for others, from its first attainment to its closing anguish and ecstasy. And now even the last human thought has faded out in the white glory of God-head. The Nirmankaya Buddha is entering on His reward—on the inevitable result of His development.

For many are the Buddhas that come silently and go; many are the ways by which they enter peace; and every creed may bring them to the Gate, by winding paths and stony, through thorns and jungles of impediments. But

in their uncounted crowds they achieve their long destiny, and pass from simple and holy lives in the world to the utter happiness that is their goal. Every day and every hour the Buddhas are passing into peace. In the kindly common speech of Japan all the dead, indeed, are styled Buddha, by a substitution of the aspiration for the fact; and the title of Buddha, the Enlightened, is the property of all blessed ones that attain the Great Release. But rarely in the enormous course of years there evolves a soul so transcendent as to be capable of the Sacrifice which is beyond all other sacrifices, the Sacrifice of Peace itself. And these are the Nirmankaya Buddhas who attain the perfect enlightenment, and have the Perfect Peace within their grasp, yet, having conquered all craving, conquer even the craving for Peace, and, in their profound pity for the unhappy, in human shape linger bound revealing truth, until their last body reaches the end of its endurance, and dissolves into its elements, leaving the released Buddha-soul to merge into the ecstasy that it had sacrificed. This was the choice that stood before Our Lord Gautama in that culminating moment beneath the bo-tree at Uruvilva; and, from the moment of his decision to remain on earth for the helping of his fellows, he became, not Buddha only—a title that he shares with all the righteous who pass through wisdom into happiness—but Nirmankaya* Buddha—Buddha who has made the unutterable renunciation. And thus alone it is that one may justify oneself in gratitude for restricting the title Buddha to such rare and resplendent ones as occur but very seldom in the world's history, and sacrifice themselves for the sake of their fellows.

In the rock of Dambûlla there are many cave-chambers

* A theosophic word, I fancy, which I only use as concisely defining the supreme eminence of the Saviour-Buddhas over the innumerable millions that are also Buddha.

carved and hewn into temples. But of them all the glory is the Maharaja Vihara Cavern—far finer than the Alut Vihara, or New Shrine. The Great-King Cavern is of enormous size, and the eye, as you enter, loses itself in perspective after perspective of obscurity. In the dimness, until both the double doors are thrown wide to receive the direct rays of the setting sun, one's gaze cannot penetrate its immensities. Then, in the flooding light, the cave's extent is revealed, reaching far back into the heart of the hill. Along the inmost wall, haloed and glorious, are throned Buddhas and Bodhisattas, and round the whole vast temple sit colossal cross-legged figures of saints and holy ones. Here and there in the midmost open expanse they have their shrines, and other great statues sit; and one wanders round in the twilight, which is all that even the sun is able to shed into the recesses of Maharaja Vihara, threading avenue after dim avenue of gigantic throned figures—impassive, calm, terrible in their bland fixity of contemplation. Behind them the rock-walls of the cavern are painted brilliantly with endless processions of abbots, with innumerable scenes of Cinhalese history. The natural cave-ceiling slopes upwards towards the door in all its untrimmed bulges and bosses. But every inch is covered with colour and design, until the effect of the whole is of an enormous painted cloth suspended beneath an invisible roof, and sagging this way and that under its own unsupported weight. For the hall has no pillar or arcade; only here and there, lost in its obscurities, rise towering shrines, or altars, or circular forests of candles. The air here, in the depth of the mountain, is cold and heavy; laden, like that of all Cinhalese shrines, with the fragrance of temple-flowers, incense, and spilt tallow. For candles are the offering here—candles from the girth of a cannon to mere tapers—and their droppings are

everywhere. In one place there is a rift up into the darkness of the black roof, through which falls incessantly a single drop of ice-cold, ice-pure water that never fails. Of this the attendant monks, of course, have made a miracle; a vase is set beneath it, brimming with its unflagging flow; and the vase stands in a little well to itself, railed off from the floor of the shrine. And there, in the immortal scented gloom, that ice-cold drop has never ceased to flow since first King Vatta Gamini took his refuge here in the hills.

Full of interminable marvels is the Maharaja Vihara. One wanders on from Bodhisat to Bodhisat, beneath the eyes of seated colossus after colossus. Dwarfing them all, there lies along one wall a gigantic image of the Lord Buddha in meditation, and over the painted ceiling go splaying in many colours the aureoles of sainthood. Here, too, are the chronicles of Lanka; here you may see the last fight between Duttha Gamini and Elala the Cholyan—pierced in the throat the Tamil conqueror falls conquered and dying. And here, again, is the coming of the holy Lady Sanghamitta, and all the miracles of the Blessed Tree. Crude, gaudy, and unconvincing are all these paintings—eighteenth-century refurbishings of the worn frescoes they copied. Simple, too, primitive, awkward, are the huge seated Buddhas and Bodhisattas. And yet their awkwardness, even the ugliness of many, make one realize anew, as one is for ever realizing, not only in Ceylon, but in Italy, that awkwardness of treatment not only does not damage the religious spirit, but even enhances it. It seems as if maturity of art has the sad gift of ousting its indwelling spirit, as if only through the eager efforts of primitive enthusiasts, groping awkwardly to express their ebullient meaning, can the pure intensity of their fervour ever transpire. With certainty of touch comes the delight

in certainty of touch for its own sake. And this is the final divorce between art and religion—the death of religious art. Even as there is more Divine spirit in Giotto, Mantegna, and the best Byzantine work than in the bland and self-conscious perfections of Raphael—interested in the treatment, but quite uninterested and unconvinced by its subject—so the gaudy crudities of Dambûlla have a rougher, more insistent conviction, perhaps, than you might find in a more congruous, advanced, and dignified art—not to mention that in the lurid twilight of the Maharaja Vihara the dim dusk softens all crudities, until your gaze can only discern long seated lines of calm gigantic figures, a great vague glow and glory of colour, on roof and wall and alley, from end to end, from depth to depth of the cavern's tremendous gloom.

But the Dambûlla of to-day is not a holy place. It has become a show, and is debauched by European visitors. The monks, as a consequence, are shameless rooks of rapacity. By every rule, by every vow, they are bound, like the Christian Orders, to refuse the very touch of money. And yet at Dambûlla here are these guardians of the shrines no less greedy than any guide to a catacomb or church. At each successive door in the cliff's face they pillage the visitor, demanding fresh sums before they will open. Even the villagers, who stream up in their wake, will confront you with long written accounts of undeserved misery, and try to make prey of you; while the guide-boy from the rest-house not only offers no sort of help as to the sums that it is decent to give these people (the only reason for which he was engaged), but ultimately demands a preposterous fee for himself, on the strength of having been perfectly useless. Therefore, when one has roamed the vast twilight of Maharaja Vihara —has seen the Passing Buddha and the Alut Vihara—then

one will be wise to break off and resist the temptation of the further doors. For, having seen the Maharaja Vihara, we have seen the one thing valuable in Dambûlla, one of the notable sights of Lanka. As for me, I have no other love in Dambûlla. I disliked the greedy monks, the chattering guide, the pestering villagers; not less did I dislike the ramshackle rest-house, with its bad food and its rude indifferent rest-house-keeper. And I cannot conceive, nor have ever been able to learn, how any animal can continue to live in such a state of utter fleshlessness as characterizes the typical rest-house chicken. I believe the breed is a special development, evolved, for the traveller's torment and the owner's avarice, to such a monstrosity of nude boniness that one could almost shave with any portion of its anatomy.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE ROAD TO SIGIRI

CEYLON may have at present no art, the architectural achievements of old Lanka may take a secondary place, but the country has a pre-eminent treasure in its chronicles. And among these the Mahavansa stands supreme. The Mahavansa was collated from earlier works, and compiled into its present form by a monk—a Buddhist monk, of course, as must always be understood where a monk is mentioned in Ceylon—in the fifth century of our era. It was then added to and supplemented as the generations went by, until to-day we have a long tale of the Cinhalese Kings, which undoubtedly takes its place among the valuable histories of the world. The Mahavansa has many great merits, first in which list comes its remarkable readableness. Being a religious work, of course it has a prolix delight in religious edifices, miracles, and pieties; but these by no means usurp the whole story, nor is the book a mere chronicle of abbeys and dâgabas. The personality of the compiler often emerges clear as we read—a man of sympathy, of experience, of a deep faith and hope. Up to a certain point he almost resembles Herodotus, as is the Mahavansa itself not unworthy of sustaining the comparison. But the Mahavansa lacks the brilliant childishness of the Halikarnassian, and replaces it with something of the weighty sense of purpose and character that you find in Thucydides.

But as a religious chronicle it is, of course, with the History of the Kings of Israel that the Mahavansa most obviously challenges comparison. And here, by contrast, emerges the paradoxical merit of the book. For it has the tolerance of the Asiatic races, as against the hot bigotry of the Semitic. It begins with all the miracles and portents of bygone ages, gathering up the clouds of tradition that gathered round the work, last years on earth, and death of the Buddha Gautama, so closely associated by subsequent events with Cinhalese history. Then it expands over the conversion of Devanampiyatissa, the founding of the sacred buildings, the coming of the bodhi-tree and its many marvels. After that it becomes a full, fair, and—as far as we can judge—extremely accurate account of the Cinhalese Kings as they came and went, fought, strove, and vanished. And at all points, wherever the word of the Mahavansa can be checked, it has always been proved to be substantially accurate and true, thus giving us a very solid basis of faith in its tremendous accounts of Anuradhapura and Polonnarua, which otherwise might be taken for romance and Oriental exaggeration.

Now, to a monk who was yet a man of his world, it was impossible that the foundation of dâgabas should be the sole merit entitling a King to praise ; yet to a man of his world, who was also a monk, it is impossible but that the founding of dâgabas should count for a good deal. And thus we find that pious works are credited without grudge to the bad and bloodthirsty ; but the interesting thing to notice is that they are never thus completely redeemed, but the chronicler always reserves his right of fair comment and uses it. Another thing the author lacks : he shows little of the *odium theologicum* which dismisses King after King from the Chronicles of Israel, with the brief comment that "he did evil in the sight of the

Lord," which simply means that he worshipped Him elsewhere than at Jerusalem, or with other rites than those favoured by the priesthood of the Temple. The author of the Mahavansa will have none of this. If his Kings abound in good works after a bloodthirsty accession, fairly well and good; the works are to some extent a counterbalancing of the murders, in as far as good works and murder are better than mere bald murder without good works.

And their heresies are not treated with any bitterness. Heresies there are, notably the ancient Vetuliyan heresy of the Abhayagiriya Vihara, of which we hear so much, and yet so little specifically, that we have no notion what it implied beyond the use of the uncanonical Vetuliya scriptures. And these heresies, of course, are stringently comminated; but there is none of the rancorous animosity which blights the pages of Roman, Byzantine, or Jewish religious writers. The heresiarch abbot Sanghamitta, who acquired so fatal an authority over the mind of Maha Séna the Great, is described as "impiously ignorant"; and after him the next evil influence of Maha Séna, his beloved Abbot of Jétavánarâma, whom not even the autocratic King could save from punishment at the hands of offended and triumphant orthodoxy, is even worse disliked by the Mahavansa, and called "a hypocrite, a dissembler, a companion of sinners, and a vulgar person."

Now, the crimes of Sanghamitta and Abbot Tissa were these: each in his time had turned the young King's mind against the orthodox abbey of the Maha Vihara, pretending that his own way was the right, and that the monks of Maha Vihara upheld a heresy. Thus the Maha Vihara, the greatest abbey, perhaps, that the world has ever seen —for the lands of the bodhi-tree and all the nine stories of the Brazen Palace made but items in its foundation—was

disestablished and left desolate. Even after Sanghamitta's death and Maha Séna's recantation, Tissa tried to maintain his new splendid abbey of Jétavánarâma on territories belonging to Maha Vihara. And, not content with this, the heresiarchs caused the King actually to demolish the brazen palace itself, and to transport its fabric to the glorification of Abhayagirya. Next, having destroyed the Maha Vihara, Sanghamitta dared to move the King against no less a sanctity than Thûparâma itself; and only then, in the very culmination of his purpose against the holiest of all holy places, was he opportunely murdered, together with Sona, the Prime Minister, by a certain pious woman, the daughter of one of the King's secretaries. Now, in the circumstances, all things considered, "impiously ignorant" would not have been the worst accusation of Cyril against Nestorius, of Elijah against Ahab, of the image-worshippers against the great Eikonoklast Emperors.

And so, in the process of time, Maha Séna, deprived one by one of his ministers in wickedness, continued for long his fight against orthodoxy; but ultimately even he, a very strong man, found himself unable to cope with popular feeling, and so at last renounced his evil ways, and was received back into the peace of the Church. The chroniclers are not exalted over this, and allow the King credit for perfect sincerity of religious feeling in what was probably no more than a political move, like the Catholicism of Henri de Bourbon, or the Anglicanism of Elizabeth Tudor. The author of the Mahavansa, indeed, does not lay any obvious stress on the conversion of Maha Séna; he merely chronicles the King's benefactions and acknowledges that "there was no defining the extent of his charity both in food and drink." "He thus," briefly concludes the historian, "performed actions both good and evil." The moral of it all is "that this monarch,

having performed, through his connection with ill-disposed persons, acts both of piety and impiety, his after-fate was in accordance with his merits. From this example a wise man should avoid intercourse with impious persons, as he would guard his life from the deadly venom of a serpent." And this, it seems, is a weighty and far from brutal summing-up of a King who had most vehemently and persistently attacked the very existence of the writer's religion and churches ; for the wicked heresiarch and the Prime Minister had even sown masaka-seed over the holy place where the four bygone Buddhas had condescended to linger while on earth.

Maha Séna reigned from 277 of our era, and was succeeded by his son, Siriméghavanna. When this pious monarch heard from the monks of his father's misconduct, "he was appalled at the result of evil communications," and diligently restored all the buildings that Maha Séna had dismantled. He devoutly cultivated the Maha Vihara, and rebuilt the full glory of the Brazen Palace, though none could equal its splendour as it had first been set up by King Duttha Gamini. Then, after twenty-eight years, this good ruler fulfilled his destiny. Jetthatissa, his brother, a notable sculptor, succeeded, and did well ; and after him came his son, Buddhadása, in 341. He stands out above the others of his race. "He was a mine of virtue and an ocean of riches," and among monarchs he was conspicuous for his medical skill, the strong individual turn of his family taking in him this rare and fortunate direction. A hundred stories wax eloquent about King Buddhadása and his skill.

One day as he was going by on his elephant he perceived a large king-cobra lying stiff and stark on a white ant-hill by the side of the road, stretched on his back to show a monstrous tumour in his belly. "The great and good King

concluded that the cobra was suffering from some complaint. Accordingly he descended from his elephant, and, approaching the distressed reptile, thus addressed him: 'I know the reason of thy coming, king-cobra. Unquestionably thou art highly gifted; but as thou art also addicted to fits of rage on sudden impulse, I cannot touch thee to treat thy complaint. So what is to be done?' Whereupon the cobra, perfectly pacified, put his head in a hole, and left only his body exposed. The King then opened the serpent's belly, extirpated the tumour, applied efficacious remedies, and closed the wound." The snake was instantly cured, and the King thus communed with himself: "My administration must certainly be really excellent; even the animal creation recognizes that I am a most compassionating person." Nor was this rather Jack-Horner-like comment of the King's the end of the matter, for the grateful serpent returned with a fee in the form of an invaluable jewel, and the monarch set that gem for an eye in the colossal stone statue of the Lord Buddha at Abhayagiriya.

Indeed, though, to judge from his legend, and from the impression he made on the chroniclers, King Buddhadása must have been a wonderful man, pitiful, and filled with miraculous skill. It is pleasant to linger awhile with the kindly physician before we plunge onwards into the tragedies of Sígiri. He was a mighty founder, all the island over, of hospitals and asylums for the sick and the deformed. For these he set apart a twentieth of agricultural produce, and whenever he went abroad would carry with him, folded in his royal waist-cloth, his case of surgical implements. Many of his miracles are interesting, as showing how his age had grasped the existence of animalculæ. Thus a monk drank some tuberculous milk and developed worms. The King, being called upon to

treat an apoplectic horse, caused him to be bled, and gave the monk the blood as an emetic. The monk thus got rid of the worms, and the horse at the same time was relieved—a double benefit, which caused the King to exclaim : "Surely this medical science is a wonderful one!" Then in the same way, by drinking infected liquid, a man engendered a serpent, which caused him such internal torments that at last, exhausted, he fell asleep with his mouth open; whereupon the King tied a bit of meat to a string, and put it in the sick man's mouth. He instantly had a rise : the serpent, allured by the savour, came up, swallowed the bait, and was safely landed. The King's comment on this cure was this : "Jivaka knew the science well, and was physician to the Supreme Lord Buddha; yet what more notable skill than this did he exhibit to the world, although in all loving-kindness he performed similar acts? Oh, how great is my good fortune!"

After this it was little to cure a rheumatic monk, or to give easy labour to a woman in travail. Then another monk swallowed some frog-spawn, and in time it developed into a full-grown frog, which lived up his nose, and satisfied its hunger by gnawing his brain, and then croaked disconcertingly whenever the weather was wet. (Imagine delivering a sermon with *obbligato* from a concealed frog in one's skull whenever it rained!) But the King was not at any loss. He trephined the sufferer, extracted the intruder, and healed the wound with aseptic plasters. And the monarch's art was deep and subtle even in mental cases. One day he was going in state on his elephant when he saw by the wayside a leper, who had conceived an anger against him in some previous existence. "And the leper, seeing his enemy a King, and in royal pomp, waxed furious, and loudly vented opprobrious language, thumping the earth repeatedly with his staff;

and the good King thought to himself: 'I do not remember having done any harm to this being. Surely this is an animosity engendered in a previous existence.' Then he ordered one of his attendants to go to the leper and thoroughly ascertain the state of his mind. So the attendant went and sat down by the leper and entered into casual conversation with him. Ultimately he inquired the cause of the leper's rage, and the leper told him all. 'This Buddhadâsa,' he said, 'was once my slave in a former existence; through his righteousness he is now born a King, and, to insult me, goes parading by in pomp on an elephant. If ever he falls into my power, I will make him know himself. Even if he does not, I will have him murdered, and then certainly lick up his blood. You shall see it in a few days.'

"So the attendant went and told all this to the King, and the King, that wise personage, being quite convinced, remarked: 'This is an enmity engendered in a previous existence, and it is proper to allay such.' Then he enjoined the attendant to go again and invite the leper into his house, and make very much of him. So the attendant went back to the leper as a friend, and feigned a grief of his own against the King. 'All this time,' he said, 'I myself have been considering how to kill the King, yet have been unable, for lack of an accomplice. But now, with your aid, I shall be able to achieve my desire. Come away, dwell in my house, and give me your help. In a few days I will kill the King with my own hand.' So the leper rose up and went away with his new friend, and the attendant made the leper royally welcome to his house, satisfied him with delicious baths and anointing, clothed him delicately, filled him with savoury meats, and laid him upon a bed of soft down, sheeted with the finest of fine linen."

For some days this treatment continued, until the attendant saw that the leper, fed and warmed and healed, was restored to the enjoyment of health and a tractable mind. Then he set rich food and other daintiful things before his guest, and at last informed him that they were presented by the King himself. Thereupon the leper refused the rich food, and refused it even to the third time; but, at the last, he was pacified and ate, under his host's entreaty, "and thus by degrees he became ultimately one of the King's most devoted subjects; when once there was a false rumour of the King's murder he almost died of grief. In this manner it was that the King treated the diseases pertaining both to the body and the mind."

So King Buddhadâsa, filled with virtues, passed to heaven in the twenty-ninth year of his sovereignty. Upatissa, his son, succeeded alike to realm and goodness. The rain, one pouring night, came through the palace roof and dripped abundantly on the royal bed. Yet there lay the King all night, because he would not get the workmen into trouble by letting their neglect of his roof be known. Next day the Count of the Palace came to hear of this, and caused the King to walk in the park. While he was there the leak was stopped, and thus the King, disregardful of his own convenience, suffered no grief to fall on others. Nor was his pity restricted to humankind; tenderly would he sweep down the spiders and ants and other insects from the walls of Ruanwéli Dâgaba with a fan of peacock's feathers, saying, "Let them get gently to the ground." And when he saw a criminal carried to execution, his mind so shrank with horror that he procured a corpse from the cemetery, and then, in the night, he sent money to the condemned and got him clear away out of prison. Next, he pretended that in high wrath he would boil the criminal in a cauldron; whereupon he boiled the corpse,

and showed it to the people. So for two-and-forty years "he never spent a single moment in vain," says the chronicler.

But alas for cheap moralists and their obvious morals! —alas for good King Upatissa and all his works! For he had a brother, a shaven monk, by name Mahanama. And yet this vowed ascetic was the lover of the Queen; and these two in concert plotted the murder of the saintly King. So Mahanama the monk murdered his brother Upatissa the King, and reigned in his place, taking the wicked Queen-widow to his wife. Hastily slides the Mahavansa over the moral to be drawn from Upatissa's holy life and most unhallowed death. Silently we pass on to the reign of Mahanama, who, unfortunately, abounded in good pious works, was learned in the scriptures, and a constant contributor to the maintenance of religion. Therefore Mahanama gets lightly off with a mere statement of his crime—uncommented, unjustified, but uncomminated. The facts are simply left to speak for themselves. He was an adulterer and a murderer—like Constantine; he was also a benefactor and a pillar of the Church—like Constantine. Few ecclesiastical chronicles stand beyond reach of temptation, and this reign was specially glorified by the arising of that weighty commentator and expounder, the Brahman Buddhaghosa, of Aluvihára.

After Mahanama come a few brief unhappy reigns, and then a period of turmoil, filled with the names of Tamil usurpers in the land. Next arose a youth, whom tradition obligingly credits with unexceptionable descent. His name was Dhatuséna, and in his early days he was a monk, for whom many miracles foretold to the discerning his future royalty. And in time Dhatuséna fought down the Tamil invaders and killed them one by one, becoming sovereign of Lanka in the year 463—not far from the date that marks

that vague and mythical event, the extinction of the Roman Empire in the West, or, rather, its final reunion with the Empire of the East. Dhatuséna was a mighty monarch, large and drastic in his methods. He purified the race, and sequestrated the property of all nobles who had defiled their blood with marriage with the Tamils. Very great works, too, he accomplished without end, and greatest of all, he made the broad water of Kálavewa, most splendid of the artificial lakes that still irrigate Ceylon. The waters of Kálavewa ran straight in their sluices to royal Anuradhapura, fifty miles away. But the tale of the building of Kálavewa and its tragedy does not belong here. Suffice it to say that Dhatuséna takes high rank among the Kings and builders in Lanka, not only restoring the realm, but beautifying, building, endowing in every direction, as if he had succeeded to a peaceful united land, instead of having to carve dominion and unity and prosperity out of ruin, rivalry and decay. "Who can describe in detail," says the Mahavansa, at the end of his long chapter, "all the good deeds that he had done? It is only a mere outline that has been set forth here."

And then begins the black tragedy, and Sigiri comes to its brief evil eminence in history; for Dhatuséna the King had the dark side to his brilliant strength. Strong, he was also brutal; drastic, he was also impatient. He had two sons—the elder, Mogallana, son of the royal Queen, and the younger, Kasyapa, whose mother was *unebenbürtig*. He had also a beautiful daughter, whom he very greatly loved—as dearly as his own life—and her he gave in marriage to his nephew, the General-in-Chief, his sister's son. And one day, for no fault of hers, the General had his wife shamefully whipped until the blood ran down her thighs; and when the King saw how his daughter's skirt was stained with blood, he learned the

truth, and fury so filled him that he seized the General's mother (his own sister) and had her stripped naked and burned alive. Then the General was filled also with rage, and he went and wrought discontent in the heart of Kasyapa the Prince, urging him to seize the kingdom; and they gained over the people without difficulty, and so laid hands on the person of the King and made him prisoner. Mogallana, the heir, rose up against them in his father's defence, but their forces were too many for him, and he fled at last to India to collect an army. It would seem, in fact, that the strenuous sixteen years of Dhatuséna's reign had been burdensome as well as glorious, so completely does the revolution appear to have succeeded, so unanimous the transfer of allegiance to Kasyapa.

Be this as it may, now begins the agony of the King—nemesis for a certain evil day on the embankment of Kálavewa. For the victorious General cherished persistent malice in his heart, and hardened the heart of Kasyapa, making new mischief between the two Kings—the crowned and the fallen. For while Dhatuséna lay in heavy affliction, his realm being lost, himself dishonoured and a prisoner, his faithful Mogallana driven away in exile to India, the General went to Kasyapa, and accused the ex-King of having hidden all the royal treasure. At first Kasyapa would not believe it. "Yes," insisted his cousin; "do you not know, you that are lord of the land, your father's purpose? He is hoarding up his hidden riches for Mogallana, your brother."

Up to that point, it would seem, the ex-King had at least been dwelling in some bodily security. But now his future darkened, and Kasyapa grew angry. He sent messengers to his father in prison, commanding him to reveal the whereabouts of this treasure. And Dhatuséna, knowing nothing of any treasure, thought, "This is a

device by which this evil one means to destroy me." So he remained silent. And the messengers returned to tell the King of this. And so Kasyapa's wrath redoubled, and he sent again and again. Yet always Dhatuséna remained silent, and answered them nothing. But at the last he grew weary, and thought within himself: "Ah, let me die, then ; but I will see my old friend once more, and once more bathe me in my fair waters of Kálavewa." So he turned to the messengers, and said: "Let your master have me carried to the Lake of Kálavewa, and there will I discover all my treasures." So they went back and took the news to Kasyapa the King, who was exceeding glad thereat. And being very greedy to finger this treasure, he at once sent back the messengers to his father with a chariot to carry him to Kálavewa.

So the ex-King, deep-sunk in grief, mounted up into the chariot, and the escort set out for Kálavewa. But the charioteer had pity for the fallen King, and offered him of his own roasted rice to eat. And the heart of Dhatuséna was gladdened by this, and he ate and was pleased. So he gave the charioteer a letter for Mogallana the Prince, that if ever he came to his own he should not forget this poor man who had done kindness and honour to the dishonoured. This good thing should Mogallana remember, and make the man keeper of the King's gate. "Such, alas! is the nature of prosperity," breaks passionately off the Mahavansa. "It fleeth like the lightning. What prudent man will be beguiled thereby ?"

And on the shore by Kálavewa the King's friend, the Elder,* had heard that his old comrade was coming. "And he had made ready a rich meal of beans and water-

* And surely this Elder was the King's own uncle, the monk Mahanama, afterwards first Abbot of Sigiri; never to be confused, though, with the earlier Mahanama, monk, murderer and King.

fowl, and reserved it for the King, saying, 'He loves this meat.'" So the prisoner arrived at length in his chariot, and bowed before the Elder, and sat down by his side. "And when they sat thus together, it seemed to both as if they enjoyed the pleasures of a kingdom." And there the two old friends had their last good talk, and "held much discourse with each other, and quenched the fire of grief that burned within them. Afterwards the Elder pleaded with the King, and prevailed on him to eat of the food that was prepared; and, as he ate of his favourite meat, the Elder exhorted him in many ways, and expounded to him the nature of this transitory world, and persuaded him that he should be diligent in working out his salvation."

So then at last, the escort becoming impatient to hear his secret, the King arose and went down into the waters of Kâlavewa. And there he plunged, and drank, and bathed at his pleasure. And when he had taken all his delight of the lake that he had made, he turned upon the servants of Kasyapa his son, and cried aloud amid the flashing water: "Oh, friends, *this* is all the treasure that I have in the world!" So the messengers bound him, and carried him back to the city, and went to tell the King. And Kasyapa was hot with rage. "This man," he said, "is hoarding riches for Mogallana his son; and so long as he lives he will estrange my people from me." And then Kasyapa commanded his cousin, the General, saying: "Go, kill the King."

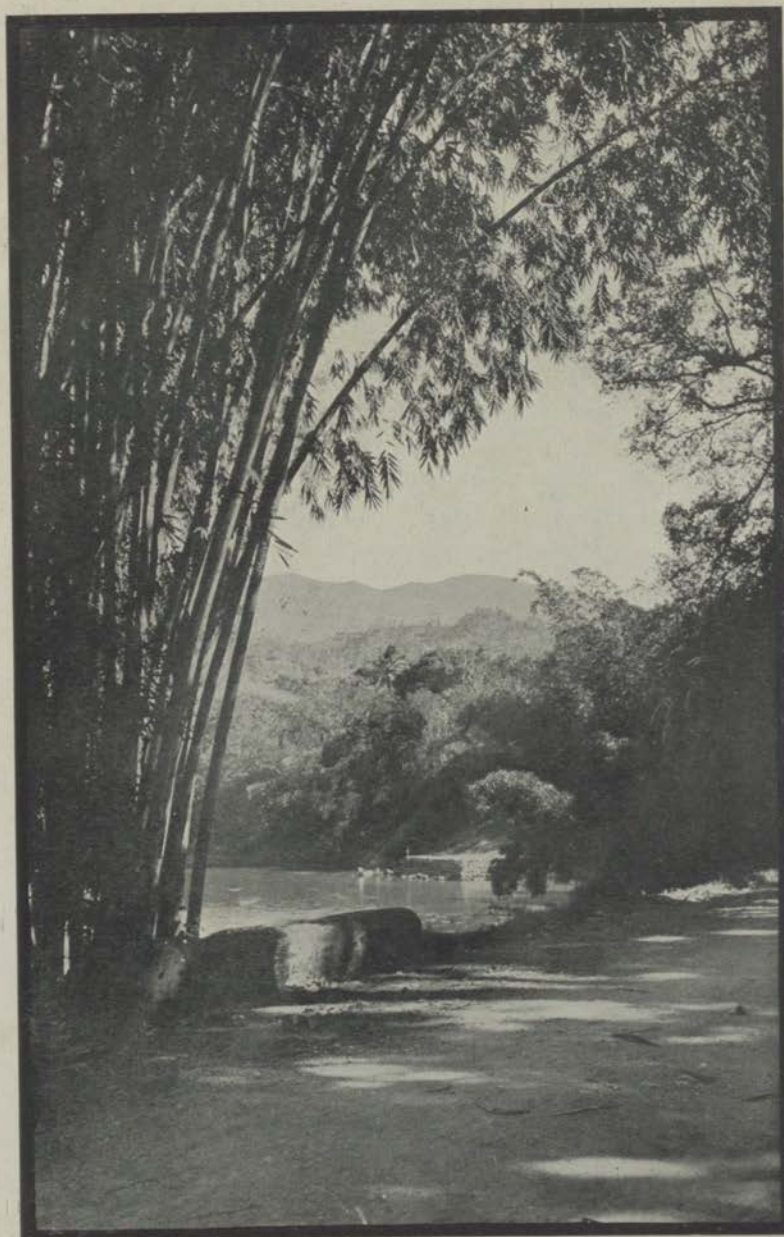
And the General, burning with malice against Dhatusêna, "was transported with joy," and thought to himself, "Now have I seen the last of mine enemy." So he put on all his richest garments and ornaments, and went in to the prisoner and walked proudly up and down before him. And the ex-King thought within himself, "This evil one would fain send me to hell by afflicting my mind

as he has already afflicted my body. What shall it profit me, then, to provoke my anger against him?" So the late lord of the land extended his goodwill towards his tormentor, and addressed him calmly, saying, "I have the same heart for you that I have for Mogallana my son." But the General shook his head, and laughed the King utterly to scorn. And when the King saw this, he knew that in that day he must surely die. So the violent man seized upon the King and stripped him naked, and bound him with chains inside the walls of his prison, with his face to the east, and so had him plastered up with clay and buried alive there in the wall. What wise man, therefore, having seen these things, will covet riches or earthly life or glory?"

So died Dhatuséna the King, and Kasyapa his son reigned in his place. And, first of all, Kasyapa sent a groom and a cook over into India to find the rightful heir, Mogallana, and kill him. But they failed of their purpose, and a strong terror came upon the parricide usurper. And he no longer dared to dwell in royal Anuradhapura, surrounded by holiness, open to invaders and retribution. So he cast about in his mind until he bethought him of the Lion Rock of Sigiri, isolated towering crag above the jungle, with no possibility of attack or unnoticed approach. So thither he removed all his treasures, and buried them with care. And he appointed the Rock his citadel, and set his new capital all about its base, far down below. A deep winding gallery he made round under the curve of the cliff where it overhangs its pedestal, and by built-out bastions he made an ascent, where no ascent seemed possible, to the shoulder of the precipice itself, and thence through a portal mimicking a lion's yawning jaws he reared a vast stairway, protected by portcullises, up the sheer cliff to the summit. And

on that summit he made his dwelling-place, and all the splendour of his palace, so that his eyes might look out for many score of miles over flat plain-land of field and jungle, to be sure that punishment was not approaching him in the person of Mogallana, neither from the north nor the south, the east nor the west. And he painted the Rock with brilliant pictures, and he set tanks on its crown, and made dwelling-places there for all his Court, and adorned that eyrie most wonderfully in many ways. And there, for eighteen prosperous years, lived Kasyapa the King; but always "he lived in terror of the world to come, and of Mogallana."

For the Mahavansa, silent as to the crime of Mahanama, cannot ever feel its conscience reconciled with Kasyapa the Parricide, despite the abundance of good works with which he overflowed. And this is no wonder, for the compiler of the first thirty-six chapters of the chronicle—that is to say, down to the accession of Maha Séna the heretic—was no less a person than the monk Mahanama, uncle of the ill-starred Dhatuséna. And though he did not, perhaps dared not for very passion, write the histories of Dhatuséna's fall and Kasyapa's usurpation, it is not unnatural that his influence, if not the influence of mere good-feeling, should have prevented the chronicle from being bribed by Kasyapa's pieties into condonation of Kasyapa's iniquities. For after a time the usurper, filled with supernatural terrors and searchings of heart, became exceedingly pious and magnificent in his benefactions. He repaired Issurumuniya Vihara, and planted mango-groves throughout the land at a twelve-mile distance each from each. And having repaired Issurumuniya, he wished to re-dedicate it under the names of his two daughters. And the monks of the Maha Vihara, to whom the foundation belonged, had many



On Mahawéliganga.

devout scruples about accepting the offerings of a parricide. However, their piety was not, of course, allowed to stand in the way of acquisition; Kasyapa dedicated his work to the Supreme Buddha, and the monks then felt that they could not refuse the property of their Master. Thus the difficulty was got over, and Kasyapa built another vihara near Sigiri Rock, and offered that in the names of his daughters. But nothing of all this—not any gift of buildings, rice, or robes—could assuage his miseries. And so, gloriously, he lived on, "in terror of the world to come, and of Mogallana."

And at last Mogallana came. After eighteen years he collected sufficient forces, and landed in Lanka. "I will catch him and eat him," said Kasyapa the King from his safe seat on Sigiri Rock. But then, filled with the inspired folly of the "fey," the King came down from his citadel, from which no army could ever have starved or driven him, and went out in force against his brother, though all his prophets prophesied evil things, and dissuaded him. The two armies met by the flank of Ritigala, the jagged mountain-range that rises blue from the jungle-sea several miles from Sigiri. And here Kasyapa justifies his sovereignty, for he did not lack supporters, nor find any treachery in his own ranks. The armies met like opposing seas, and a mighty battle ensued. And the King on his elephant of state saw a marsh stretching suddenly in his way. So he had the elephant turned to go round by drier land. But his soldiers misunderstood his manœuvre, and a loud cry rose up, "Our Lord the King is in flight!" Then Kasyapa's army paused and faltered, and its ranks were broken, while Mogallana's men renewed their attack with a roar of triumph. So the King's army was utterly scattered. And Kasyapa saw clearly that all was lost. He drew his knife, and plunged

it into his throat: then he returned the knife calmly to its sheath as a King should. And so leaned forward and died. But Mogallana, his brother, that now was King, did great honour to the dead who had died so royally. The body of Kasyapa was burned in kingly order, and his relics honourably inurned. And then Mogallana went up in state to the Sacred City, and became lawful lord of Lanka.

But from that hour darkness and dishonour descends upon Sigiri-gala. Mogallana held the place in horror, and, to wipe out its unholy memories, handed the whole place over to the monks to be purified. So into their hands passed palace and town and citadel and dwelling-place. And the fortress itself, scene of Kasyapa's royalty and terrors, became a monastery, and its first abbot was the new King's great-uncle, the monk Mahanama, uncle of Dhatuséna, and compiler of the first thirty-six chapters of the Mahavansa. Through him, perhaps, or through his influence it is, that the splendid place passes so utterly out of the pages of the chronicle after its short prominence. For, after the death of Kasyapa, and the record of the citadel's dedication to holiness, there is hardly another mention of it in the Mahavansa. It seems almost as if the guilt of Kasyapa had transferred itself to the scene of his triumph.

For, guilt or no guilt, neither the chronicler who wrote, nor the tourist who visits ruined Sigiri to-day, can escape a certain feeling of affection for the man who accomplished so gorgeously a work so stupendous as the fortification of the Lion Rock. And that one brief sentence of the Mahavansa is illuminating as an exclamation of Webster: "In terror of the world to come, and of Mogallana. . . ." There one feels condensed all the striving agony of the King, the effort, the haunting horror that was ever with

him night and day, while he bent himself, in distraction, to the embellishment of his regal seat. A lonely, fearful life that must have been of his, far above the world, on the crown of Sigiri, robed and girt and jewelled and diademed as a king triumphant, with eyes for ever straining over his battlements into the fading flat horizon that fills the far north beyond and beyond the plain of the deserted Sacred City where he no longer dared to dwell —that far north from which inevitably punishment and Mogallana should come together. And through all this went on the decoration of the Lion Rock—the building of the new capital; and so feverishly, so entirely, does Kasyapa seem to have thrown himself into his task that it is hardly intelligible how one sovereign in a space of eighteen years should have been able to accomplish half of what Kasyapa did for Sigiri.

And then, after the King's fall—nothing. The abandonment of Tel-el-Amarna cannot have been more complete—monks and monasteries; the execution of a King; and then unbroken silence descends on the Lion Rock. The chronicle deserts the place with obvious relief, although it is scrupulously fair to Kasyapa. It is even plain that he had no part, except indirectly, in the death of his father; that his parricidal order was won by fraud; that he had no share in the torment and insult that closed the great life of Dhatusena. And yet the guilt was his. Small wonder that he fled away to Sigiri, and there dwelt —one cannot escape that sentence—"in terror of the world to come, and of Mogallana." It is Kasyapa's doom; it is also, in some dim way, his atonement, even as the Death-psalm, in some mysterious way, is the atonement of Sidonia Bork.

CHAPTER IX

SIGIRI ROCK

AFTER that first sight of the Lion Rock, rising clear and high over the levels of the jungle beyond Dambûlla, you do not see the boulder-fortress again until you come into its presence. So serried and so uniform is the mass of the forest, that one may drive through it for mile after mile, without ever finding a break which admits a view over it of any higher object. Thus from Dambûlla goes the way to Sigiri. For some miles we pursue the high-road, broad and comfortable, through villages and open places, and then our way turns off to the right, and we are piercing, on a little timid track, into the territory of the wild jungle that now stretches away unbroken for many hundred miles. From Dambûlla we have seen our direction and our prospect; the leaving of the highway is our departure from the known plain world into a green inextricable tangle of fairyland, densely filling all the earth now, to the very shores of the sea beyond. Only, in the enormous monotony of its plain, there rises somewhere from its levels the bulk of Sigiri Rock, and beyond that Minneri Water, and beyond that again, in the heart of the wilderness's heart, the dead royal city of Polonnarua, very far away, by the weed-choked shores of Topavewa.

So winds our way, interminable, same, through the unbroken lane of green on either hand. There is nothing

to see, nothing to marvel at; only the blank wall of dense, dark green to right and left. In the twilit perspective spindly black trunks, serried and sickly, fade into the green gloom beneath the boughs, and, though the air is hot and brilliant with waft on waft of fragrance, no flower or brightness is to be seen, except occasionally the scarlet galaxies of Ixora in the blackest darknesses. For the jungle of Ceylon, as I saw it, has not the opulent trailing splendours that I have read about elsewhere. Perhaps these are to be seen in Africa and South America. The jungle of Ceylon is rather like a very crowded, ill-kept English wood, impenetrable and tangled, without any tree of great individual eminence, but made up of countless mediocre specimens, which grow to a uniform height of 30 or 40 feet, and form a regular sky-line for mile after mile. The ground beneath is too heavily shaded by boughs, too closely crowded with saplings, to be anything but bare and desolate—what you can see of it. And, before you, the red sunlit road goes stretching steadily on between the green wave to right and left—an Israelite's passage cut through the unruffled tide of a vast green sea.

I am lucky now to be writing of a place over whose pronunciation I can never feel a tremor that my readers are stumbling; for Cinhalese names form a dreadful stumbling-block and scandalum to English tongues. Please let no one be frightened into renouncing the famous name of King Devanampiyatissa; buckle to bravely: he is really quite simple to the courageous—Dévănang-piatissa. And Abhayagiriya is no worse—just A-bia-giria. The English character, loving decision and precision, stands alone among national characters in also loving definite stresses on words. First, second, or third, some syllable in every word *must* be accented. Not so the French or the Italian; above all, not so the Oriental. Ask

an Englishman to say Fédórá or *Zórayáh*; he will almost inevitably give you Fedōra or Zorāyah. But in their own language the two names have exactly the same unemphatic emphasis on all three syllables. So, in Japan, one is perpetually being brought up short by one's Britannic desire to place a stress. Brother has been divided from brother, and sister sundered from sister, over the question as to whether the dead capital of the Hojo should be Kamakūra or Kamākŭra. A popular poem's scansion depends entirely, to my ear, on reading "to Buddha at Kamākŭra." And yet both pronunciations are wrong, and error has arrived through the difficulty of hitting the proper stress, which encourages both errors by simply giving equal stress to all four syllables, laying no accent anywhere, and calling the place Kámákúrá.

Perhaps this dislike for accentuation is a special characteristic of Oriental languages, whose interpretation rests so much on the subtleties of inflection that they probably desire to economize in unnecessary stresses. In any case, one has to treat Cinhalese names as one should treat Japanese. Nálanda is not, as one had hoped, and as had seemed so obvious, Nalānda; it is merely Nálándá, with, perhaps, a certain inevitable lengthening of the first syllable. Sigiri is comparatively plain-sailing, although if one wished to be classical in spelling one might write it Sihagiriya for the confounding of the unwary. However, for their better guidance, I write it Sigiri, so that, with the soft Continental vowel sounds that England, apparently, stands alone from all the world in hardening, not the most unwary could go astray in talking of the Lion Rock. It is because of these difficulties of pronunciation that the spelling of both Indian and Cinhalese names so varies, of course; and, while dissyllables and trisyllables are fairly simple, one's real trouble begins when one has four or five

syllables, all carefully unaccented, to deal with. One's tongue seems to demand accent in so long a word, as one's palate demands salt at dinner. Accent gives pause, rest, value. But the Orient says No; you must do your best with Pólónnárûa, giving no stress to any syllable, or, rather, which is equivalent, of course, a faint, fairy-like stress to all. If there is ever any weight at all in the word, it lies for a fragment of a second on the third syllable.

But these quadrisyllables are dreadful. There is a place further down the road which is indifferently called Hăbărânĕ and Habáranë, being really Hábáráné. One comes very gladly, after Habarane and Tirappane, on the -awa terminations, which not even an Oriental tongue can avoid stressing, as in Kekirawa. There is a place down on the sea from Ratnapura (there's no doubt about -pura, by the way; that is always long and stressed, though, at the same time, all the other syllables have a little stress of their own)—a place called Kalutara—which looks fairly simple as you write it; but never, not after the most heart-breaking efforts, could I manage to twist my tortured tongue to anything even distantly resembling that name as it emerged from the mouth of the Cinhalese. With six-syllabled words we come into clearer water. Not even an Oriental can get through these without pausing somewhere on a stress. Anuradhapura is as easy as London, once you understand that there is an unwritten "j" in the middle of the word, which turns it into Anurajapura (Knox spelt it Anoradgburro). To this rule of non-accentuation, though, there are exceptions. Daladá Mâligawa is a sheer refreshment to say, so orotund and filling is the emphasis on the last syllable of the first word and the first of the other. Daladá Mâaligawa, Daladáaa, Mâaaligawa—what a relief after the clipped mincingness of Hábáráné! "Whew!" as old Adam said, "it's like eight

hours at the seaside!" If I seem to repeat the word excessively, my reason is now explained. And "h," too, is an important letter, since I am dealing with pronunciation. It vanishes in Anuradhapura, but otherwise is always made the occasion of a separate aspiration to itself. The title of the Lord Gautama and of all the holy dead, for instance, is not "Bûdda"—still less, of course, must its first syllable be pronounced to rhyme with Bud under any provocation or temptation whatsoever—but Budd-ha; and His Way is Budd-hism, His Truth Bod-hi, His earlier progression the Bod-hisat.

Consumed in meditation on the evolution, the vanity, the inanity, the pronunciation of words, until the best-known syllables become to one's ear grotesque fantasies, cacophonous and devoid of meaning, slowly we traverse the long hot miles of our road. So long, so hot, so unnoticeable is our progress, that I have given up every hope and thought of Sigiri Rock. I have ceased to believe that any such thing exists; we are travelling endlessly on through an eternal green void, uneventful, interminable; there is nothing more anywhere but heat and verdure, and the occasional flicker of a big sapphire butterfly over the hot red road. And then, with the uncanny suddenness of all these great things, the Lion Rock leaps into sight.

For we debouch without warning upon a broad, cleared space, and draw up over fine turf at the gate of the Rest-house compound. And there, straight before us, above a broad meadow, above a slope of woodland, stands up all the bare tremendous majesty of Sigiri. The Rest-house looks full at the fortress, and from its garden, filled with bright flowers, one may watch the Rock in all its changes of mood. Delightful and fairy-like above everything is this little Rest-house of Sigiri. Quite open on every side

to the balmy airs of heaven, its broad eaves rest upon four columns, and there is nowhere any wall to shut one off from the air. Behind are the bedrooms, clean and naked, ordinary walled boxes for sleeping in. But the living-space is thus a mere open arcade, sheltered only overhead from rain, and by its broad eaves from excessive sun. All about it run trellises and screens of climbing flowers, fine ferny growths, starred and glowing with crimson trumpets; and in front there lies the little garden, all a glare of blossom. Clean, sweet, ineffably restful and delicious is this place. Arriving at so ideally benign a resting-place, one breaks instinctively into the opening chorus of the Oedipus in Kolonos—εὔιππου, ξένε, τᾶσδε χώρας ἵκου τὰ κράτιστα γὰρ ἱππαύλα—until truth triumphs, and one realizes that this land could hardly be called εὔιππος.

Perhaps the clear charm of Sigiri Rest-house, so rustic, so gentle, is due in part to the contrast of its view. There in full sight stands grimly up above the world that old terrible monument of crime and terror and doom. Poised on its pedestal, the Lion Rock frowns out across the jungle, its rounded cliff all scarred and blackened with long trails of rain and tears from the dead centuries. From here the Rock—vast pebble from the shingle of a planet greater than the solar system—has a curious effect of having been plastered over once from end to end, from top to bottom. The southern face has been pecked here and there into cavities, and these, with the scarred under-cut beneath them, seem alone to show the ash-grey stratum of which the mass consists. All the rest appears uniformly coated with a lighter artificial ochreous substance, stained everywhere with rivulets of black and rust and russet from the summit. On the summit wave still a few sad trees—relics of the jungle that flourished over

Kasyapa's palace before the excavations were set on foot; and on the brow of the bare rock can be seen in the glare of midday long parallel streaks of shadow, that show the ruts and grooves cut in the solid stone, to hold up the bounding wall and the houses behind; for the citadel, not content with occupying the summit, descended at all points to the last permissible point of the slope, upborne from the very precipice by bastions and buttresses.

Awful indeed is the Lion Rock, haunted place of old immortal sorrows. It is awful even under the kind glow of midday, standing bare and extinct into the blue, grim outpost of the vast jungle on whose edge it rises—relic of no intelligible geological formation or cataclysm; for, with a rare exception in the neighbourhood, all the other outcrops from the plain are jagged and pinnacled—not enormous pebble-shapes, such as these, lodged, as it seems, on an opportune eminence, which acts as a pedestal. Magnified inconceivably, Sigiri has the effect of those Pyramides d'Euseignes—perched boulders that you see towering on their pedestals as you go up towards Evolena and Arolla. Then the hot daylight curves round the face of the cliff, bringing into view fresh streaks of colour, fresh lines of shadow, that mark the foundation-grooves of some vanished wall or palace. Next, sunset turns a radiant face on Sigiri, and the whole bulk stands gorgeous in amber and orange lights before the glow fades like the flash of the Rock's royalty, and the cliffs go grey as the subsequent grey obscurity of Sigiri. In the breathless hush of the evening the presence of the citadel becomes so vocal in the stillness that one expects a mighty voice to ring out in lamentation with the tale of a fallen King and glory extinguished. Then through the blue velvety darkness sails up the jungle-moon, full and ghastly. The indistinguishable humped immensity of the rock passes in

a moment from dark monochrome to a ghostly life. In black and white it glimmers phantasmal against the azure night behind, its scars and tear-streaks all turned by the moon to ebony and silver. At its feet far down sleeps immovably the leaden cloud of darkness that is the jungle. In the enormous sapphire silence the world seems empty of everything but that one tremendous haunting, that incalculable multitude of ghosts that is Sigiri Rock.

It was towards the sunsetting that I started from the Rest-house to make the ascent. First one continues along a placid meadow, parallel to the fortress, and thence at right angles through a jungle filled with old collapsing walls, along the embankment that once dammed up the broad lake that made the water-supply of the city below the castle. All this ground on all sides, vacant now of everything but brushwood and scrub and weed, was once the royal city of Kasyapa, ranging round its bunds and lakes, no less orderly and no less splendid than royal Polonnarua or sacred Anuradhapura. Everything is clean gone and unguessable to-day ; only there appears far overhead in a sudden break of the big trees that flourish all down the slope of the embankment the towering mass of the Rock, frowning into the sunset. Now that we have traversed the dam we are full in the middle of the ruined city, and here on the steep acclivity that rises and rises towards the cliff's foot are walls and wreckage of stone as we mount through the jungle. When at last we achieve our scramble, and emerge above the last tree-tops, we come upon open ground, leaping stiffly up to the overhanging southern face of the cliff.

About all this winds the ruin of fortifications, blurred enclosures full of weeds, dim vanishing remnants of the splendours with which Kasyapa crammed every inch of his territory. At the foot of the slope above the wood-

land lie scattered enormous boulders, tumbled pell-mell from the precipice in days far beyond the beginning of history. Large as houses are these blocks, huddled here and there, leaning against each other; and every inch of these, too, has been used, either by the monks who made this place a Vihara, whose name has long been lost, in the centuries that went before Kasyapa, or by the Parricide himself, or by the crowded sanctities to which the place was handed over after his fall to be purified of its dreadful memories. In their hollows are seen carved dwellings for monks. On their slopes are seen slot-holes cut to receive pillars, or steps or grooves to hold a beam. Not a yard, not an inch has been wasted. Sheer faces were made the wall of lean-to chapels; hollows were seats of audience; so, too, were the stiffest slopes; and on the pinnacles were pulpits, and in the depths were living-rooms. This tumbled desolation was once a centre of holy activities, thick-set with inmates, and humming with life. One vast block has been carved into a cistern; another was evidently levelled for the floor of a church; and so the indefatigable genius of the workers adapted every pebble of the unpromising jumble to their needs.

Above this the slope goes rising swiftly over ruined revetments and walls. Here ran the high-road round the rock, and from here mounted the grand double stairway that led converging up and up to the main gate, which alone gave admittance to the Long Gallery of King Kasyapa. Far overhead looms the wall of the gallery, smear of ochre and amber under the bulge of the precipice above; for Sigiri at all points overhangs its pedestal, and is therefore absolutely impregnable to assault. Up the broken flights our track continues, mounting sternly, till we come into the red-brick portico that marks the site of the gate. Now we are under the very curve of the rock itself, and

our way lies along a precipice beneath it, where iron stanchions have been planted of late years to substitute the first fallen part of the Long Gallery. And here one can see the skill with which so great a building was achieved on so sheer a precipice. Deep grooves were cut, very wide apart, in the face of the stone slope; and, held by these, a deep thickness of wall rose at a safe inward angle, 12 feet or so above the paved way, until the whole was sheltered and secure. The terrace that ran between rock and wall was thus absolutely protected. Above, the cliff's bulge curled far out overhead, and the wall rose 9 feet or more on the outer side, so that no bowman, no arbalest, no weapon of war could possibly reach anyone in the Long Gallery.

So, rising by flights of steps, the Long Gallery winds under the face of Sigiri. But Kasyapa was not content with security; he would have beauty also and magnificence. The wall of the gallery is of some lime plaster, finished with a glaze that is now a lost art, though modern architects are trying to rediscover it. This glaze is of a warm, soft yellow, and the coping is finished off, where each series of steps occurs to break its rise, with mouldings and decorations. Far above the Long Gallery, just visible from its floor, hang the famous fresco caves of Sigiri, midway up in the swelling bulge of the precipice. These are, perhaps, the greatest puzzle of the Rock, for all along the southern face, in those pecked holes of the precipice that we noticed from the Rest-house, Kasyapa had painted a series of frescoes. He may have had the whole cliff painted from end to end, but in the course of years colour can only now be discerned in these protected cavities; but in every such cavity the relics of plaster and colour can be seen, and in the biggest fresco hollow survives a complete series of pictures. The whole rock is coated

here with plaster, on which, from a dun background of conventional clouds, appear spattered about, with no sign of composition or order, groups of women, only visible to the waist, in their setting of vapour. These women have been very diversely interpreted: some give them a dishonouring name, thanks to the brilliancy of their decorations and their *décolleté* condition. Others deny that they are *décolletées* at all, asserting that they are clothed in perfectly transparent bodices, which seems simply a more tactful way of achieving the same end. Others declare that they are priestesses or princesses on their way to a shrine, attended by handmaidens bearing offerings. So far as I have seen, there appears little of the order of a procession; but I did not, I admit, choose to scale a dreadful little bamboo ladder which mounted up from the Long Gallery to the fresco cave, swaying over vacancy as it went. Instead, I studied the ladies of Sigiri from the facsimile paintings at Colombo, which are admitted marvellous in their accuracy.

They are brilliant people these painted women, whether Queens or courtesans. They are marvellously crowned and jewelled, and their faces are afire with individual character. Almost all are attended by handmaidens of darker hue, but of hardly less gorgeous decoration. The art is evidently that of Ajanta, whose convention these paintings copy, far surpassing anything else that we know of Cinhalese work in this kind. But their miracle is this: why did Kasyapa have these very elaborate frescoes made where nobody could by any reasonable possibility ever hope to see them? It is idle to pretend that anyone could. The fresco caves hang midway up the bulging cliff, equally unapproachable from the gallery and from the summit. There is no trace of a ladder leading up from the gallery or down from the citadel; such would have been very

unsightly and jarring. It is possible, of course, that the whole face was covered with this fresco, and that it only happens to survive in these cavities, where rain and weather could not destroy it. Yet these cavities are of very artificial appearance, suggesting that artifice has, at all events, improved them. In any case, it is evident that Kasyapa dealt royally with his royal city.

Fifty feet below the frescoes, dimly to be discerned thence, behind the wire casing that now protects them from birds and wild bees, the Long Gallery continues under the cliff to its north-west corner. Here it breaks again, and an iron bridge fills the space from which it has fallen away. Beneath, the precipice falls sheer; then the shelving terraces from below reach almost to the level of the gallery, and all has been built out upon an enormous bastion. Beyond this the slope abuts on the northern end of Sigiri hill, rising half-way up the cliff, and tailing away to northward in a gradual spur. All this ground was dwelling-place and palace; the foundations have been excavated, and now lie plain to see in every level space. One big terrace is completely laid bare, and its flights of steps, its house-walls, can be clearly discerned. At the end, where the slope again becomes abrupt, lies poised a huge boulder, which Kasyapa's men propped up from below with inserted wedges of stone, for fear it should some day slide down upon the crowded town below; and this whole long slope, up to the shoulder of the Lion Rock, was once all a succession of broad white terraces and white stairways. In the midst, dwarfing everything, high over everything, swelled the stupendous mass of the Rock, like a vast tower, up which went curving the Long Gallery and the portcullised final terrace that led to the summit, all a flash of white and a glow of gold, where rose into the sky the pinnacled refulgence of the King's palace.

Bare, naked, and desolate, Sigiri Rock still stands high among the great works of the world, and in its glory it must have been a glittering marvel—the finest miracle of human building ever achieved.

So the restored stairway mounts to the plateau of the shoulder that lies behind the northern face of the cliff. Here, on the flat, were guard-houses and many buildings, and here was built up the famous Lion Gateway; for the final gallery rose up abruptly from this landing-place, through the mouth of a gigantic lion couchant, straight up the sheer cliff, and so went winding, through portcullis after portcullis, along the edge of the precipice to the impregnable crown of the Rock. Even now, when almost all is gone, the shadow and shape of the lion remains. He was of brick, all plastered with white, and his head must have towered half-way up the bluff, so huge are the paws that still extend their talons on either side of the entrance. Here it is that Time has been most cruel. The Long Gallery, protected by the overhanging curves, has hardly suffered at all; but here, exposed to every change of weather, terrace and wall and lion have fallen away like old swallows' nests plastered on to a cornice, and the rock face rises naked to the summit, only accessible by an iron stairway set up by Government. Even so, it is dizzy work ascending that stark cliff, and the railing is so planned as to let you slip most comfortably through, and tumble a couple of hundred feet or so to the terrace of the Lion. The ascent at first is sheer and over empty air. High above, under a ledge, hang clustered the hives of those notorious enemies, the wild irascible bees, no respecters of persons, however august. Then, passing the slots that once held a gate, the topmost bulge of the rock is reached, and the railing leads you round, over the very shelving lip of the abyss, along the track of the final

approach. Here the stone is furrowed by innumerable series of those deep parallel grooves that served for the upholding of the wall; and, clearly, the uppermost terrace can have been no less magnificent, solid and sure, than the Long Gallery itself.

And now, through the wreckage of a last gate, we are on the summit of Sigiri. Red raw earth, mean little huddled walls of red brick, cover the whole expanse. Kasyapa was pressed for space, and must needs use every inch of this precious ground; and, of course, in the days when the brickwork was all overlaid with plaster and colour, when magnificent superstructures went spiring to heaven with golden pinnacles, the citadel of the King must have been kingly. Now, however, in its utter desolation and ruin it is pathetic as nothing I have ever seen—mean and squalid and huddled, utterly tragic in the completeness of its nude ugliness. Always, one sees ghost-pinnacles of white and gold, high domes and dâgabas and towers, clean snow and glitter, crowding together on the King's citadel, and royally dominating the broad city of gold and splendour so far below at the Rock's foot; and then the eye returns to this sad wreckage, the field of an abandoned brick-kiln, and, in the contrast, the past is more gorgeous than ever, the present sadder, uglier, and yet mysteriously more appealing. And, over all, drives through the gloaming across that desolation a chill, wailing wind, very wandering sad ghost of the King, for ever crying mournfully the tale of his splendour and his misery and his end, the noble work that he did, the bitter heart he had, and the utter extinction of both in the vast ocean of transience.

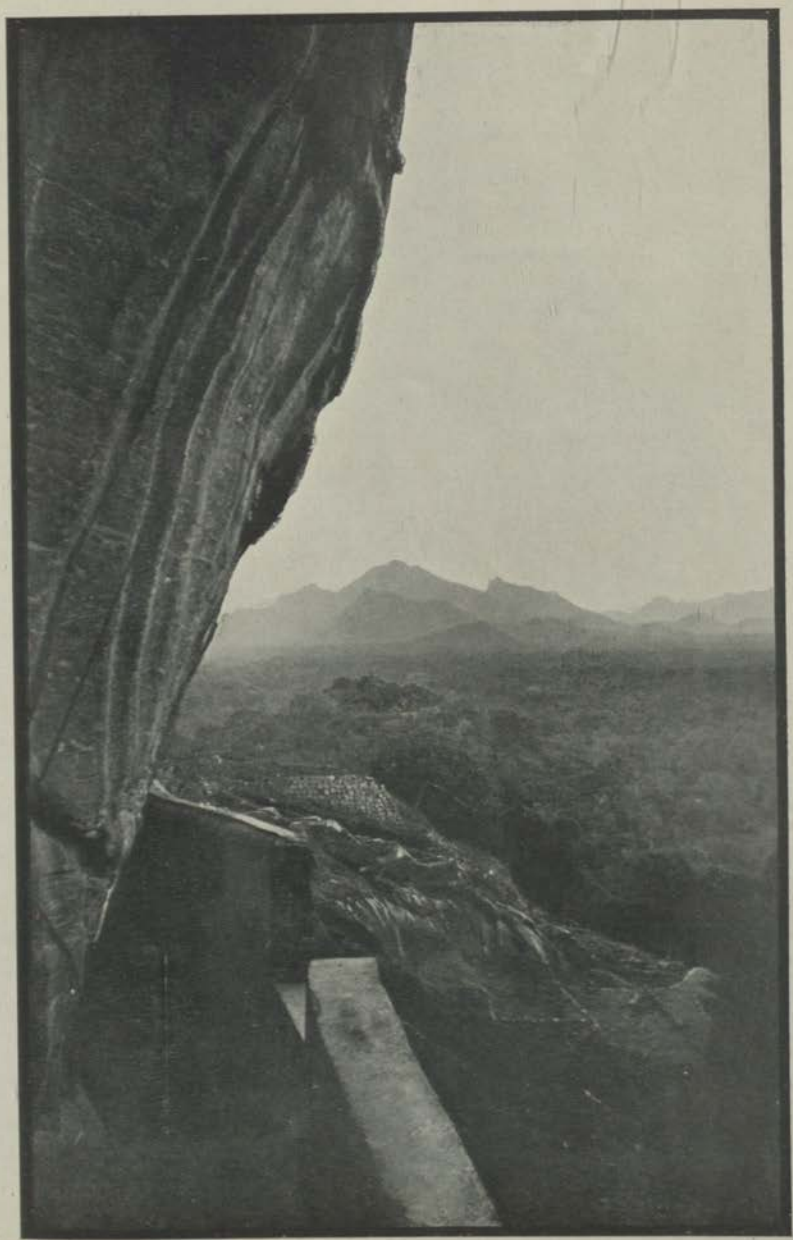
Wandering here and there amid the thronged ruins of the citadel, up and down the little squeezed flights of steps, in and out of King's palace and Queen's presence-

chamber, one feels at last the oppression of human tragedy as one could never feel it amid more pompous and pretentious ruins. No Roman arch, no Babylonian tower could give one quite the poignant impression of these débris of royalty, so proud and yet so abject, so mean and yet so splendid in the perfect tragedy of their abandonment. The story of Sigiri closes on the sustained organ-note of majesty that mercifully rounds off the story of the Lady-Canoness—

> "So must human pomp and state
> In the grave lie desolate;
> The head that wore the kingly crown
> With the base worm lieth down."

Outpost of the jungle stands Sigiri, high above the world, and from its summit one sees the wideness of the earth as never before; for on all sides, as far as eye can see, stretches the indistinguishable calm ocean of the forest. Away to the south, in range after range of jagged lovely outlines, rise the blue Kandyan Mountains. Dambûlla's humped black dome of rock appears far remote, like a whale's back rising from the sea. And the jungle, away towards the sunset, is all of a deep emerald green, solid and luminous in the red light. Unbroken, round the base of Sigiri it flows, and, from this height, the eye can discern brilliant patches of culture, and the ineffaceable traces, even in the wild woodland, of fields and territories once worked in the days of the King.

And then, out towards the east, the jungle stretches unbroken, far and far, until a flash of silver shows you Minneri Water. And away beyond that, again, a smear of duller green indicates the lotus-packed choked expanse of Topavewa, along whose shore lie lost in jungle the bones of the dead royal city of Polonnarua. From Sigiri, indeed, one commands all Lanka's history; for, turning northward,



LOOKING BACK, FROM THE LONG GALLERY OF SIGIRI, TO THE KANDYAN MOUNTAINS.

the eye is stayed, in the distance, by a high ridge of pinnacled mountain. This is Ritigala, the Gleaming Rock, sacred range all jostled with ruins, beneath whose slope it was that Kasyapa at last met Mogallana his brother, and paid the price of his glory. And there, just above the last spur of Ritigala, there twinkles and wavers in the remotest profundities of the blue horizon beyond, a tiny point of blue, so faint, so microscopic, as hardly even to be a point, but rather a mere speck, scarcely perceptible. Yet, as you look, the thing becomes inevitable—no empty fancy. Far out in that indefinite plain there *is* a solid something, visible even across all these expanding miles. And that something is the greatest of all the great dâgabas, Abhayagiriya Dâgaba, keeping watch and ward over the greatest of all sacred cities, the Sacred City of Anuradhapura. Ghostly in the gloaming is the citadel of Sigiri Rock, and haunted eternally with spirits of fear and doom. So evil and dark is the atmosphere of the desolate cliff that the coolies of the archæological department were only with difficulty induced to make the perilous ascent, and dare the ghosts and demons of the plateau by putting axe to the crowded vegetation, and spade to the buried unholiness of the King's palace. Utter must have been the abandonment of the place, for but little has been found. A few domestic implements have been fished from the depths of the slimy green reservoir that collects water on the lower southern level of the summit; a few coins of Arcadius, Honorius, Theodosius, Julian, Constantine, and Valentinian; a few fragments of bronze—a trumpet, the latchet of a shoe: this about exhausts the list of riches recovered from Sigiri. The citadel must have been left completely to the tenancy of its sad royal phantom, and by the time history descends to the age of Polonnarua, and the twelfth century of our era, the upper gallery must have fallen, and

all access failed, for there has not been found any relic from the period of P'rakram' Bahu the Great.

Supposing one could forget the insistent presence on Sigiri of Kasyapa the magnificent, the haunted, the parricide, all the other associations of the Rock are no less grim. Even if Mahanama the Abbot established a vihara on the summit of the citadel, which does not seem to have happened, the place, after Kasyapa's death, loses all importance, until it emerges briefly and tragically in the tale of King Sanghatissa the Second. Sanghatissa succeeded his brother Aggabodhi the Second in the year 608 of our era. But Dalla Mogallana—not, of course, Mogallana, son of Dhatuséna, who had died in 515, but a general of Aggabodhi the Second — revolted against Sanghatissa, and worsted him, and took his place on the throne. And so, the dethroned King wandered away into the jungle, with his son and his Prime Minister, and thence to the Veluvana Abbey, where, on the Abbot's advice, they all assumed the Yellow Robe. But Dalla Mogallana found that a young son of his rival had been left in Anuradhapura, so he was greatly enraged, and sent to have the child's hands and feet cut off. And the child wept bitterly when he heard his doom, and entreated, saying, "How shall I eat my cake if you cut off these hands of mine? It is my hands that serve me with cake." And the King's Minister was melted when he heard this, and shed tears. But he dared not disobey Dalla Mogallana the new King, so with sobs and lamentations this coward cut off the left hand and the left foot of the Prince. Meanwhile, though, the royal monk of Veluvana thought he would escape southward to Rohuna in his monastic disguise. So he set out from Veluvana with his remaining son and his Prime Minister. But Dalla Mogallana, having failed to secure the King, was perpetually on the look-out for him, and had posted

spies on all the roads. So King Sanghatissa was discovered in his disguise and taken prisoner. King Mogallana was overjoyed when he heard it, and ordered that the captive King, the Prince, and the Prime Minister, should be straightway carried to Sigiri Rock. And there the King and the Prince were to be beheaded, but the Prime Minister, having seen his master's end, was to be brought back alive to King Mogallana to serve him.

So the royal prisoners were taken to Sigiri Rock and made ready for death. The Prince, when he saw this, begged that he might be the first to die. So they granted his request, and beheaded him; and afterwards they beheaded the King, Sanghatissa. "Oh, ye who care to take heed of human actions, observe the deeds of wicked men! So evanescent is prosperity—fugitive, and not within one's power to control. Ye who put your trust therein, why, then, do you not strive rather after the happiness eternal?" And then the executioner turned to the Prime Minister of the dead King, and told him that he was now to be carried back alive to Anuradhapura, there to serve the new King. But he laughed at them, and answered: "Have I lived to see the headless corpse of my master, and do you think I shall live to serve another master after him? Alas! but what idiots! Truly, I believe you are lunatics and mad." So he fell down there, and clasped the feet of the headless corpse in so firm a grip that none could sunder the living from the dead; and so they beheaded him there also, and carried all three heads to King Mogallana, who openly rejoiced. And thus, in that bloody and splendid drama, closes finally the history of Sigiri, as the Lion Rock appears in the Mahavansa. And, indeed, it would take many a monk and many an abbey to exorcise the grim ghosts of that haunted splendour far away there in the trackless forest.

CHAPTER X

TO POLONNARUA*

It is a long journey from Sigiri to lost Polonnarua in the jungle. You return first from the Lion Rock to the main highway, and thence you continue many miles onwards through forest and field, until you come to Habarane. Here, in the Rest-house, you must needs spend the night. For Topavewa Water lies six-and-twenty miles from Habarane down a rough, immature road that branches away into the woodland on the right.

And now, at last, on our way to Topavewa, we are in the very heart of the wild jungle, in the tangled wilderness that has reigned over Northern Ceylon since the fall of the Northern Kingdom. The road, a mere streak of red sand and gravel, loose after rain as the bed of a torrent, stretches away before us between heavy unbroken walls of verdure on either hand. Over such a track it is impossible that the poor horses shall hurry; accordingly our pace is funereal, and each long stretch of road seems never-ending, until at last another unfolds beyond it round the corner, and seems no less infinite. Dark and dense is the green wall of the jungle to either side, and the sunlit road appears a channel, a deep gully, filled with liquid heat. The air vibrates with the hot light, and hot

* Alas, that all my photographs of Polonnarua proved failures! Doubly alas! since no photographs of Polonnarua have been published for many years, and none of the restored Wata-dâ-Gé:

sweet fragrance comes rippling in our faces as we go. Great butterflies, living sapphires, hover and dart; birds of almost mythical splendour flash across the clearing and are lost in the jungle again. We are now on the lawful territory of the wild things: elephant roams this vast forest; bear and leopard may lurk in any thicket. Little jackals trot lazily up the road ahead of us, and at last, more bored than frightened, lope off to right or left into the jungle, whence their keen eyes watch us, and their sharp nose scents us as we pass. And the jungle-cock, brilliant with his opulent curl of tail, grubs with his hens at the highway side, and then, with wide spread of plumage, carries his heavy splendour of glossy feathers overhead into the forest, flapping and flopping as he goes, father and beautified anticipation of all the cocks that ever took prizes at a poultry show.

It is midday before we turn off from the main Polonnarua road and drive down the side-path that leads to our resting-place on the shores of Minneri Water. Already, through bays and inlets and marsh, have we had sight of the lake. For as you approach Minneri the dense jungle begins a little to clear, giving place to a more open country. The gleaming expanse of Minneri shines through reed-beds and over shallows full of rushes, where the water-lilies bloom. Sometimes the country beyond is opened up to view, and at one point, very far away across lake and jungle, you see looming in the distance the rounded northern end of Sigiri Rock. Then our halt is reached, and we come to pause by the shore of the lake.

For nothing is more misleading than the popular habit of calling these enormous artificial reservoirs "tanks." A tank—to me at least, and probably to others—suggests a tidy four-sided cistern, perhaps the size of a room or a house, or at most a London Square. But the tanks of

Ceylon are vast sheets of water that would swallow three of Windermere, and think nothing of it. By the engineering craft of the ancient Kings of Lanka whole broad tracts of country were turned into inland seas by the damming of their streams, and the lakes thus formed, completed with sluices, embankments, locks, were the pulsing hearts of Northern Ceylon, their arteries carrying life and nourishment to the wide cultivated lands that then covered the whole of the plains. King after King added lake after lake, until the arid climate of the northern flats could not prevent them from being the finest irrigated territory in the world. But, of course, with such dependence on their sluices, the Cinhalese were lost if a bund should be destroyed or a channel laid waste. And while the land prospered mightily in the maintenance of the tanks, and every inch of it was under cultivation, in the attack upon the tanks it collapsed and went to ruin. One by one the big lakes were punctured, turned loose, their channels blocked and cut by the invaders; and so by degrees cultivation failed out of Lanka, and the jungle at last, pitiless and unbroken, became sole tenant of all the many hundred miles that had once been open smiling country, filled with happy labour, the property of lord or peasant, the subsistence of abbeys and the dower of Queens. It is only of very recent years, with the restoration of Minneri and Kalavewa, that cultivation and prosperity are timidly considering the possibilities of a return to Northern Ceylon; and there are many lakes yet—the large majority—weed-choked and desolate, and useless for evermore. Even royal Topavewa is a field of lilies.

Beautiful with a huge calm beauty is Minneri Water. The lake ripples placid to the shore, and gnarled trees stand out amid its blueness. Beyond their flickering shadow stretches away into uttermost distance of bay and

inlet the great expanse of the tarn. Over the further shore pale hills are seen billowing and waving above plane after plane of the horizon, until the eye is lost in the last sapphire convolutions of the Kandyan Mountains. In shallow places stand thick the white stars of Nymphæa, and snowy egrets—crested, Japanese—flap lazily over the surface, trailing their long, thin legs from perch to perch. Over all, from the clear sky, beats down a passionate sun, almost tranquil in the very intensity of his radiance.

And so, in time, our rest at Minneri is accomplished; once more the horses undergo the yoke, we return to the main road, and set our faces again towards Polonnarua, still fifteen miles away in the jungle. Now the country is like some English park—diversified with stretches of wild herbage, with here and there a cluster or coppice of trees. In damp places the grass is turned to pure blaring turquoise by a little annual marsh plant, succulent and dazzling. Ixora in dark corners hangs its fiery star-clusters. And the road grows ever more and more arduous, loose, and sandy; the horses more and more weary, poor souls! with the evil destiny that compels them to pull a carriage over ground so difficult. The air is glowing red with evening before we draw near to Polonnarua, and our pace is a dull, broken-hearted walk, which makes me feel as if one milestone would never, never succeed another, as if eternity itself would never make an end of the five miles or so that still lie between us and the royal city.

At last, at a turn of the way, there gleam suddenly before us white bones of the dead capital—a forest of square stone pillars, leaning this way and that from the slope of grey rock that rises up amid the trees. And there, in that ghostly church or palace, still linger in the twilight its ghostly courtiers or ministers—a band of

tall, grey shapes, poised erect, hieratic, on the rock, each with a snowy reverend ruff of beard. Another instant and that phantom congregation goes bounding away into the woodland, a mere train of big, white-frilled apes, trailing their curled tails after them as they dive away, like fish, through the tree-crests, with a swish and roar of surf amid the branches. Then the road turns to the right, and on its far side suddenly comes into sight a crowd of ancient buildings occupying a broad raised rectangle. We are in the heart of royal Polonnarua, and there to our left rise the Thûparâma, the Sat Mahal Prasada, and the Wata-dâ-Gé. So we drive another hundred yards or so, then up a steep slope, on to the embankment of Topavewa Water, and there come to rest before the irrigation bungalow, in full view of all the choked lilies and lotuses of the lake stretching away, galaxied on dull green under the angry orange of the sunset, to where, over the uttermost rim of the tossing ruffling green field that once was clear water, there roll, far away above the flat miles of jungle beyond, the jagged amethystine ranges of the mountain country. Thence, leaving the horses, I stroll back towards the "citadel" to make my first auspicious acquaintance with Polonnarua in the conducive magic hour of the gloaming.

And the first sight of Polonnarua is disappointing. The buildings seem cheap and rather tawdry—compilations of brick and stucco. For Polonnarua is the city of a mixed nation's decline, and not, like sacred Anuradhapura, the city of a pure-blood nation's dawn and midday. A mighty man was P'rakram' Bahu the Great—a mighty diplomatist, a mighty warrior, a mighty builder and restorer; but not even he could give to his city of Polonnarua the splendour of stone and wrought marble that glorified the Sacred City in the north. With the exception of the Wata-dâ-Gé and the tiny Siva shrines, almost

all the surviving buildings at Polonnarua are of brick, faced and plastered with stucco mouldings; but the Wata-dâ-Gé, in revenge, is perhaps the most beautiful building in Ceylon. It stands at the back of Thûparâma, on the "citadel," and comes upon one as a surprise, just as one is beginning to realize how unjust is one's feeling of disappointment. And the Wata-dâ-Gé finishes the banishment of that disappointment. Figure a huge round building rising from a broad walled platform, and at the far end a great outstanding square portico with angles, copings, and balustrades of wrought stone, by which alone one might enter the shrine. From the four cardinal points of the compass lead up flights of steps from the platform into the building itself. These steps are heavily carved with fat little grinning dwarfs on their faces, repeating the decorations that prevail at Anuradhapura, with just that touch of excess and exaggeration which marks the decline of an art. On either side the solid balustrade comes curling down in a carved crest of stone, adorned with lions of Chinese convention. Round the drum of the building itself run many courses of little lions' heads, and from the top of the steps a fine railing of fretted stone encloses the dome. This screen is of many square panels, wrought into a diaper of four-petalled flowers, and broken at regular intervals by tall, plain obelisks that rise high above it, and break its uniformity with gracious dignity of effect. Within the main chamber, roofless now, and desolate, there rises a humped mound of raw earth, and facing the four entrances are four colossal seated figures of the four bygone Buddhas. Beautiful indeed is the Wata-dâ-Gé, with the beauty of exquisite serenity and proportion. This, and no other, is the shrine that King P'rakram' set up for the Tooth-Relic after its removal from Anuradhapura to Polonnarua.

Skilful and cunning restoration has been profitably expended on the Wata-dâ-Gé. All this "citadel" and all its ruins were impenetrable jungle not so many seasons since; tree-roots had riven the buildings and forced them this way and that, so that each shrine had to be cut cunningly out of the tangle, and pieced and supported and bandaged. Now the "citadel" lies plain and bare and open, very lonely and pathetic in the twilight. Over all its expanse lie scattered stone blocks and pillars and fragments of forgotten shrines. In the litter lie, too, the statues of the Buddhas, forgotten and dishonoured, where once they were robed in colours and clothed with priceless jewels. Here and there pious hands have lifted them up, and make offering, as to their seated brothers in the Wata-dâ-Gé, before whom you will never fail to find some little humble tribute of areca-flower or temple-bloom. Here, railed in by replaced barriers of stone, is the Preaching-hall; and here, tall, smiling, graceful, rises a statue of a young magnificent King, roped in splendours, smiling wistfully out across the cleared desolation of what was once a stately pavement. Tradition says that this is P'rakram' Bahu himself, in the days of his youth. But, alas! Polonnarua runs riot in such unfounded assertions, and it may just as well, for any proof we have, be any other monarch. Near the Preaching-hall stands the ruin of the Atá-dâ-Gé, a long and stately church, with mullioned windows as you ascend its aisle and chancel. At the end of the holy place stood once three holy figures, with the Supreme Buddha in the midst. From the inmost shrine of the Atá-dâ-Gé you look straight down its aisle on to the great portico of the Wata-dâ-Gé, immediately opposite, and so the eye, in an unswerving line, is led up to the face of the Buddha who sits aloft in the northern entrance of the Tooth Shrine.

Beyond the Wata-dâ-Gé rises a strange tower of seven stories, with a horseshoe obviously moulded on the front of each. Quite square are the courses of this tower—superimposed cubes, such as a child may build with his blocks; and there seems no use for it, as its interior appears solid. This is the Sat Mahal Prasada, and after much uncertainty and discussion, it was found to be the work of King P'rakram's mercenaries from Cambodia. The Sat Mahal Prasada stands on the last limit of the "citadel," and behind it rises again the unbroken heavy verdure of the jungle. Between the tower and the Atâ-dâ-Gé lies a jumble of fallen stone, and, conspicuous in its midst, an enormous block of stone exquisitely carved at each end with elephants and devices, and covered over all its formidable face with an inscription of King Nissanka Malla, recording how "the strong men of Niccanka brought this block from the holy Hill of Mihintalé in the days of Sri Kalinga the Conqueror." They must have been strong men indeed, as their task more than rivals the building of Stonehenge; and useless too, for here lies the huge block derelict, never, apparently, having served any pious use, or any use at all.

The other prominent building on the "citadel" is what is called the Thûparâma, a solid erection in the shape of a church, with aisle and transepts, and a central dome achieved by the overlapping of course after course of brickwork, until the whole was covered in. All the faces of this were covered with plaster, rich with the most elaborate mouldings. The walls are of vast thickness, the inmost naos a tiny cavern of darkness in their depths, where once the Most Perfect One was adored, and where still against the wall stand adumbrated the remains of a colossal seated figure built of brick. And the Thûparâma, looming, heavy mass, gives us an ominous insight into

the fate of the royal city. For, though the mighty foundations remain intact and unshaken, the no less mighty walls have been shattered away from each other, this way and that, by a violence far surpassing the slow pressure of trees, which has left wide yawning crevasses in the fabric. There has been at one time a most savage and furious attempt to destroy the building utterly, and by this, and by the four wrecked colossi of the Wata-dâ-Gé, we may judge the ferocity with which the city was sacked in the days of P'rakram' Bahu the Second.

After the episode of Sigiri Rock, in the sixth century, the history of Lanka is one of distraction, poverty, invasion. Anuradhapura was far advanced on the long sad path of its decline ; King after King reigned ineffectually, briefly, violently ; the abbots and monks sank more and more into mere greedy-bellies. In 664 King Dathopatissa, with his coadjutor and successor, dared actually to demolish the ancient shrines and use their treasures for the upkeep of the army. And at last, soon after the accession of Séna the First in 846, enemies from without achieved the ruin begun from within, and the Sacred City was sacked and spoiled by the King of Pandu. His aim was not conquest, but mere rieving, and accordingly he wreaked merciless barbarity on the helpless capital in the plain before he swept back to India. At last Séna the First, when the invaders were gone, returned for a brief, dim spell of royalty. But all hope and comfort in Anuradhapura were now clearly at an end for ever. It still remained the official metropolis, the centre of sanctity ; but the Kings dwelt more and more at Polonnarua, safer and more remote ; and at Polonnarua died Séna the First, "meditating the violent deeds of the King of Pandu." And now, too, the Cinhalese Empire of Vijaya the Conqueror was at an end ; every family was,

by this time, through intermarriage, as much Tamil as Cinhalese, and the purity of the race was lost.

A long and tragic period of disruption and struggle ensues, broken at last by the strong reign of Vijaya Bahu the First. He ruled well and hard for five-and-forty years, and his sovereignty marks the beginning of the short, splendid Polonnaruan period. He made his seat at Polonnarua, and adorned the rising capital with abbeys and rich buildings. He died in 1120, leaving the Northern Kingdom once more in a fair hope of prosperity. With the long and complicated tale of P'rakram' Bahu's rise to the throne it would take a careful history to deal. Suffice it to say that, through endless wars and difficulties, this young man, a Brahman, of the Hindu religion, of foreign blood, fought his way at last to the sovereignty of all Lanka. By cunning balance between Cinhalese and Tamil he contrived to secure for himself a strong position, and when his throne became unassailable he embarked on the daunting work of restoration with an ardour that fairly earns him his epithet among the other "great" sovereigns of the world. He found the country poor, distracted, corrupted; its lakes broken, its culture ruined, its priesthood degraded, its people wretched; and by dint of almost superhuman efforts he contrived in a reign of three-and-thirty years to raise Lanka to a security and a brilliance that it had hardly known since the days of Dhatuséna or Duttha Gamini.

And with P'rakram' Bahu the Great arrives the climax of Polonnarua. Hitherto, though a royal residence, and often the seat of the executive, it had never competed in prestige with the Sacred City. Now, however, the King definitely transferred the government to the new capital. He did not dare neglect the old city; but, while seeing decently to the restoration of the shrines and abbeys at

Anuradhapura, he concentrated all his energies on the glorification of Polonnarua, and held, in fact, exactly the position of the Eastern Emperors towards their old deserted capital in Italy. It must never be forgotten that P'rakram' Bahu was as much an alien in blood as Leo, Basil or Justinian : Anuradhapura was his Rome, towards which he could have no very ardent personal feelings. Further, unlike the great Isaurian or the great Macedonian, he was even an alien in religion as well; and, therefore, Polonnarua is full of the Hindu influences imported by its Hindu embellisher. But the Oriental, from the very dawn of his history, has always understood that all good men are of one religion : tolerance, to his view, is not even a virtue, it is simply the inevitable result of logic and reason : and intolerance is not so much a sin as a folly, amounting almost to imbecility. P'rakram', then, observed a decent kindly line ; there is no idea that he ever renounced his Hinduism, and his Hindu buildings at Polonnarua are as beautiful as anything there ; but not only, no doubt, from tolerance, but also from policy, he showed the greatest consideration and munificence towards the religion of the land. Perhaps his very position as an alien and an outsider made it easier for him to embark on that thorniest of all paths, that of a peace-maker in ecclesiastical quarrels.

For P'rakram' Bahu was so strong a man that he undertook the control of the Church—almost in the same decade that saw Henry the Second fighting St. Thomas of Canterbury in the same cause. This was the King's view of things, as expounded by the Mahavansa: "In times past, this people was much oppressed by Kings of old, who placed heavy burdens on them by means of unjust taxes and similar burdens, so that great grievances arose ; and the Kings were led astray by love and hate, and fear and ignorance,

and cared not to govern for the advancement of the Church and the Kingdom, although it is thus that subjects should be governed, that their happiness may so increase. And the religion of the Most Perfect One has now for a long time past been shaken to its foundation by innumerable heresies, and broken up by the disputes between the Three Brotherhoods, and served by crowds of shameless monks, whose only care is to fill their bellies; so it has come about that the Faith of the Lord Buddha has fallen to decay before even the five thousand years have elapsed, for which He foretold and promised that it should endure. . . . All these things had I meditated as the fruit of my labours when I worked with heavy toil to establish my Kingdom. Now, therefore, is the time to render all these things according to my desire."

So this brave man convened a great Œcumenical Council, and, as the chronicler admits, had far harder work reconciling the brethren than ever in establishing his sovereignty over Lanka. Things were very bad. The monks' highest idea of decency lay in supporting their (quite illegitimate) wives and children. "This was actually their one notion of purity!" cries the Mahavansa, in a rare burst of sarcasm. Also, there was utter diversity of worship, as in England before the Reformation; and even the good monks took no steps to meet each other and hold congresses. But, first of all, arose the enormous problem of how to reconcile and heal the schism that raged ever since Maha Séna's time, and long before—almost from the first days—between the Three Brotherhoods—the old orthodox Maha Vihara of Devanampiyatissa, the Abhayagiriya Vihara so favoured by Maha Séna under the prompting of the heresiarch Sanghamitta, and the Jétavána Vihara that he founded for vulgar Abbot Tissa. Maha Séna had died in 304; from his death to P'rakram' Bahu's accession

in 1164 the long vain schism had torn the Church, resulting, it is true, in no official persecutions or martyrdoms, but breeding copious uncharity and distraction. To deal with so thorny a question was not merely difficult, it was as dangerous as any minute theological point that ever wrecked a Byzantine Emperor, or caused Pope, Primate, Metropolitan to be trampled underfoot and battered to death.

In the reign of Silaméghavanna (614 A.C.), who succeeded wicked Dalla Mogallana, the murderer of King Sanghatissa, a certain ecclesiastic named Bodhi, not even an Elder, but an ordinary monk, was so afflicted with the corruptions of the Church that he implored the King to take order in the matter. This the King did, but the evil monks, of whom the Church was thereby purged, seized on the reformer and murdered him secretly. The King, however, was not put off by this, but continued with all the more zeal in the path of Church reform. For the honour of martyred Bodhi he made a stringent dealing with the corruptions and idlenesses of the large abbeys, and implored Maha Vihara to keep Sabbath with Abhayagiriya and be reconciled. When the warring brotherhoods utterly refused to do any such thing, the King unfortunately lost his temper and abused them all in no measured terms, after which, without any effort to make his peace with the offended confraternities, he went away to the South Country, and there was seized with a very suspicious illness, which terminated his reign; so ended that effort at reform and reunion.

Nothing daunted, P'rakram' Bahu embarked on his council. This alien, this Brahman, this Hindu, brought to the consideration of Buddhist theology an unbiassed fairness, which no doubt had its effect, and gave him an advantage over reformers from within; yet the task was

overpoweringly difficult, and took long of accomplishment. He collected the wisest and the most learned and the saintliest abbots; then he summoned the hostile brethren. But before they could be reconciled with each other, the Maha Vihara, oldest and most orthodox of foundations, having the unbroken Apostolic succession from Mahinda, must needs be reconciled with itself. Under the King's presidency, and under the guidance of the chief Abbot Kasyapa the Great, knotty point after knotty point was softened away. Though the schism was very ancient, there were many bad monks who quite refused to treat for reconciliation, but went abroad, or threw off their robes, and refused to attend the Council or have anything to do with it. Then the King, "partial to none, and resolute," added his personal weight to the discussion, and saw to the restoration of dignitaries unjustly deposed, and to the general smoothing over of details. At last, with infinite labour, he achieved the pacification of Maha Vihara, and unfrocked such monks there as were notorious evil livers. But even them he would not treat cruelly (or perhaps he thus bought their consent to their own deposition), for he found snug and well-paid berths for them in the royal service, saying, "Let them not destroy religion for the sake of lucre."

Then came the larger question—the reconciliation of Maha Vihara with Abhayagiriya and Jétavánarâma. Abhayagiriya, it appears, used an uncanonical document, and held by the Vetuliya Pitaka as the very gospel of the Lord Buddha, whereas it is not, said the Maha Vihara (and its faithful supporter the Mahavansa), a canonical document. So, with strong resolution, the King at length achieved the reconciliation of the two, and then turned his attention to the Jétavána brotherhood. Here, however, the case was hopeless. These schismatics were totally devoid alike of

goodness and learning, "having no wish, even at that late hour, to mend their ways and have regard to the teaching of the Most Perfect One." Neither the King nor the collected authority of the Council could bring them to any better mind. "There was in them neither piety nor any other firm virtue." So the King degraded the most promising of them to the rank of novices, and unfrocked the worst-reputed, finding rich posts for them also in his service. "And thus did the King, after spending much time and labour, bring about the purity and unity of the Church, and restored the Orders to the place they held in the days of the Buddha." And, if it were not for the absence of bloodshed, treachery, and martyrdom, might we not be reading about any of the Great Councils of the Christian Church, under the presidency of Constantius the Second, Justinian, or Charles the Fifth, except that most certainly none of those monarchs would have made room in their service for degraded schismatics and heretics? It is to the stake that these orthodox rulers would have dismissed their expelled adversaries, rather than to a comfortable place under the shadow of the throne. No hope would they have allowed themselves to conceive that minds ill-fitted for the Church might yet do honest and profitable work in the world as laymen or State officials.

This, then, being accomplished, P'rakram' Bahu set himself to the restoration of Lanka. He reorganized the whole system of taxation; he restored the sluices and embankments of the ruined tanks. He made good and valid laws, too, for rich and poor; even for the wild things, bird and beast, he appointed a day of holy truce once in the week, when no man's hand might be against them, and all things should go free of fear. Above all, he set himself magnificently to the embellishment of Polonnarua. Besides all these religious edifices that this wise

alien set up for the glory of the Buddha, he made himself gardens and palaces and theatres, all glittering with golden pillars, adorned with frescoes, tapestries, and jewels: and parks for his grateful people of the utmost splendour all along by the banks of Topavewa Water. Polonnarua, at the time of his accession, had been brought as low as sacred Anuradhapura. But he soon changed the face of things, and "extended the city wall, building a strong chain of ramparts, exceeding high, beyond the circuit of former Kings, and embellished it with plaster, till it was white as a cloud in autumn." He filled his city with alms-halls and recreation-halls and refuges: and saw, with royal charity, to the relief of the poor. Of hospitals he made as great a speciality as his predecessor, good King Buddhadâsa, building vast halls and richly endowing them. Each bed had a male and a female nurse in attendance, and every Sunday the King himself would make a friendly tour of inspection, and chat with the sick, and confer with the physicians as to treatment. Sometimes he would correct a faulty diagnosis or order a change of medicine; sometimes he would give the invalids their dose with his own hands. Once a poor raven came cawing piteously, in agony from a cankered mandible, and by the King's own orders was treated in the hospital until it was cured, and then let go.

And for the population "he made a park, which they called Nandana, for it recalled the Nandana garden of Indra Himself. Its trees were twined with wreaths of jasmine, and the air was filled with flights of bees, joyous in the honey of a thousand blossoms. The champak, and half a myriad other scented trees and flowers, were planted there in abundance, to delight all comers with their bloom and fruit. The park was further made pleasant by the far cry of the peacock and the sweet bell-like song of

Kokila, that charms the world and gives never-failing pleasure. It was interspersed also with sheets of water set in delicate grassy banks, and made delicious alike with lily and lotus and with the music of birds. It was railed, too, by pillars decorated with rows of ivory statues. And there was a bathing-hall to dazzle the eyes of the beholder: machinery brought up the water through pipes, and it sprayed forth until the place looked as if filled with clouds that rained their fine moisture without ceasing." Such was the public park of King P'rakram' Bahu the Great, designed about the time when our Henry II. lay dying, dreadfully and desolate, in the gaunt old Castle of Chinon. Even to-day one might safely commend its scheme to philanthropic County Councils.

And if this was the public park, thus was the King's own palace. He built it so splendid that nothing could be compared with it; it was like a building of Visvakarma Himself that has not been surpassed. Its name was Vejayanta. "It had seven stories and a thousand rooms supported by many hundreds of lovely pillars. It was surmounted by a forest of pinnacles, and made rich with wrought work of many leaves and flowers. Golden were its gates, and of gold were its doors and windows; and its walls and staircases were so planned that they gave pleasure in all times and seasons. It was well kept with thousands of beds of divers kinds; they were made of gold and ivory and other substances, adorned with carpets of rich value. And the splendour of all was yet enhanced by the King's own bed-chamber. For this sent forth incessantly a scent of flowers and incense, and was made lovely with rows of large golden lamps, and exceedingly lovely by garlands of great pearls which hung at their four corners—of pearls white as moonbeams, which, wavering to and fro, seemed to smile in scorn at the

beautiful ripples of Heaven's river, the sky. And the network of tinkling golden bells that hung about the palace and rang out like the Five Instruments of Music, seemed to proclaim the unlimited glory of the King's merits."

The Queen, too, best-starred of women, was worthy of this splendour, and worthy of her husband, the King. For the Lady Rupavati, of all his many hundred wives, best pleased the heart of P'rakram', and made it captive. "She was beloved of him as deeply as she herself adored the Triple Jewel"—the Buddha, the Truth, the Church. "Excepting her own lord, she regarded no other man—not so much even as a blade of grass—no, not if he were beautiful as the chief of the gods. She spoke loving words, and conformed her conduct to the wishes of the King. She was adorned with the ornament of many virtues, such as faith and piety. In music and dancing she excelled, and her mind was as keen as the point of a grass-blade. And she was always generous and warm-hearted, and by the impulse of a really merciful disposition; chaste and wise and virtuous, pure in action, of spotless name and fame; she remembered the exhortation of the Saviour as to the fleeting nature of things . . . and, knowing that there is no help for us short-lived beings whirled about in the Ocean of Life, save that alone which lies in good kindly actions, she was diligent in acquiring all sorts of merit, and caused the Great Golden Thûpa to be set up in the midst of the city, to be, as it were, a stout ship of gold to carry her swiftly across this sea of transmigration to the Peace of the further shore, which is Nirvana." Thus were the King and his wife, most excellent of mortals.

It is pleasant to linger awhile with the author of the Mahavansa, in contemplation of so much rich beneficence, happiness, and splendour. Doubly brilliant is the

reign by comparison with the darkness that went before, and the deep darkness that descended afterwards on Lanka, never to be wholly lifted again; and as one reads the history of the period, one wonders how it was all done. In the first place, to clear the ground for discussion, the Mahavansa, ecstatic as its tone may be, is pre-eminently a document to be trusted. It may describe a palace or a temple in strains of rapture, but, when all is said and done, we may safely take for granted that, as the Mahavansa described that temple or palace, so that temple or palace at one time was. The authority of the chronicle, in big things and little, has been severely sifted, but has never been in any way seriously discredited or shown untrustworthy. (Allowance, of course, must be made for its mythical opening chapters, chronicling the last years, visits, and work of the Buddha Gautama; but from the moment where the history emerges into the plain light of fact, the Mahavansa tells an honest tale, with whose guidance we are safe in threading the jungle of Cinhalese Kings and dynasties.) And thus we may accept the account of P'rakram' Bahu and all his works. And the wonder remains how he, out of a distracted, impoverished, hopeless nation, contrived to compile so solid a dominion, to extract so splendid a series of manifestations. The work must have been terrific, and all, probably, forced labour; and yet we are given to understand that the prosperity of the country advanced by leaps and bounds. Poised and wedged, as it were, into security between powerful enemies, P'rakram' seems to have held a position analogous to that of Elizabeth Tudor, and to have succeeded in accomplishing much the same work; and yet the whole fabric of his gorgeous dominion was uncertain, and the brilliancy of his kingdom died with his death. Few such royalties have collapsed so utterly into such

(Restored) Stone Railing, at Anuradhapura, belonging to Abhayagiriya Vihara.

utter ruin. Indeed, driven furiously along the path of reform and reorganization, the nation must have been left completely exhausted at the King's death by such a forcing of the pace, and fell an easy prey to the enemies who swept down upon his work.

The King died in 1197, two years before Richard of England. A few troubled brief reigns led on to the sovereignty of that busy builder, Nissanka Malla, who reigned for nearly a decade. After him, in eighteen years, no fewer than twelve Kings arose and passed like shadows. Then, not half a century after Great P'rakram', came the inevitable invasion, and Magha, the Prince of Kalinga, swept over into Lanka during the reign of P'rakram' Pandu. The King was seized and blinded, and Magha became Lord of Lanka—"through some fault of the people and some great demerit," says the Mahavansa, much as Philip the Fourth attributed the woes of Spain to God's anger against himself. "He (Magha) was a follower of false faiths, and had a mind only to do mischief. As a wild fire that consumes all tender shoots in the forest of Charity; as the sun when he closes the petals of the lotus Justice; as the moon when she darkens the splendour of that lily-pool, Patient Endurance—even so was his mind, wholly enslaved by ignorance. . . . And they robbed the inhabitants of their garments and their jewels and everything they had, and violated the chastity of families hitherto uncontaminated, and cut off the hands and feet of the people. The rich men they bound with cords and tortured and brought to poverty. In the viharas they would take up their abode and beat the pious laymen therein; and the children they flogged, and sorely distressed all the monks and nuns*

* Thus there were still nuns in the thirteenth century, and it is idle to say that convents died out soon after Sanghamitta's time. *Cf.* also Jetthatissa's widow, the Queen-nun, about A.C. 624, p. 216.

and other three Orders of religious; and they compelled the people to labour, and laid heavy burdens upon them. Many books also of high excellence they loosed from their binding-cords, and cast them away and scattered them in diverse places. Even the vast and glorious dâgabas, such as mighty Ruanwéli—visible embodiment of the splendour of ancient pious Kings—they spared not, but utterly destroyed them, and caused a great many bodily relics thus to disappear, which were as their very lives unto the saints of old. Alas! alas!"

And on that sad "Alas!" closes the first chapter of Polonnarua, the pristine magnificence of the city, and all the mighty works of P'rakram' Bahu the Great.

CHAPTER XI

POLONNARUA

BUT gone is P'rakram' Bahu, and gone is Rupavati, his pleasant Queen, and the twilight glows red and grey across the citadel of Polonnarua. The rosy glamour fades by degrees from the golden drum of the Wata-dâ-Gé, and, in the gloaming, tones of dead blue and white come upon all the scattered blocks and beams and pillars of naked stone that lie heaped over the weed-grown expanse. Like rain-washed bones they glimmer amid the grasses, and their wreckage is as that of a giant army destroyed very long since.

And then, as I return through the twilight towards the irrigation bungalow, which by courtesy of the officials has been put at my disposal for the night—very fortunately for me, as at present there is no Rest-house at Polonnarua, though one is now building — there glimmers far off in the dull twilit green a roof of stone. Beyond the boundary of the citadel lies this half-hidden building, lost in a little dell, with weed and bramble circling it round in a spray of verdure. Through the brake I leap and plunge away towards it, never heeding the possibilities of evil beasts that may lurk in all this dense and thorny herbage, full of tiny prickles that adhere to one's legs and work their way through the skin. Behind me, on the raised and walled rectangle of the "citadel," the high mass of Thûparâma, the round bulk of the Wata-dâ-Gé, still catch

the last dying memories of the sun; I am hastening forward into deep dusk, where the forest looms close on all hands, and grey twilight fills the glade. So, over trenches excavated and then overgrown again with weed, I jump and clamber down into the very precinct of this lost building. In a cleared hollow it stands plain before me, situated so low that only its topmost parts appear over the green as you approach, and thus, until you are upon it, you have no suspicion that any such building is there.

A very beautiful and exquisite shrine is this, too—a small temple, all of carved stone, delicately fitted and wrought. In almost every detail the thing is perfect, and perhaps it is more than fancy that finds Hellenic memories in the purity of its line and the perfection of its proportions. Square and concise it rises, and behind are the wings and porticoes by whose steps and gates one finds admittance to the inner shrine, and so through the porch into the inmost naos itself. Sprouting here and there with green plumes of shrub is the fine stonework of the Propylaia; grass springs from the cracks of the pavement, and waves in a thick mat from all the roof. The shrine itself is bare and dark; the ceiling is almost sound overhead; and the guardian god alone has vanished from the Holy of Holies, where once his statue sat throned on the broad flat stone that still occupies the darkness of the adytum. The three outer faces of the square are finely designed and finely executed, adorned with stately ranks of columns in high relief, and many other embellishments about roof and pediment and cornice. One thing there is specially noticeable about these pilasters, which tells or suggests a tale: on the lateral faces their capitals and bases are carved and finished; on the front they are merely roughed out ready for the craftsman. Now, to what catastrophe does this point in the great days of Polonnarua—to failing funds,

to an artificer's disgrace, to a King's death, or to the savage ruin in which the royal city was overtaken some thirty years after the splendours of P'rakram' the Great ?

Tradition calls this lovely jewel of stonework the Daladâ Mâligawa of Polonnarua, asserting that this was the shrine of the Tooth-Relic. Tradition here, as so often in hardly rediscovered Polonnarua, lies ; for this temple is not Cinhalese, but Tamil of the finest ; it is not Buddhist, but Hindu ; it is not a shrine of the Tooth-Relic, but a small temple of Siva the Destroyer. The Tooth-Relic, we know, was treasured in the Wata-dâ-Gé, and in all probability this Sivite shrine, so beautiful and ornate, is some family chapel of P'rakram' Bahu the Great, who, for all his cult of Buddhism and its ancient monuments, never swerved, so far as we are told (and, of course, we *should* be told with a flourish of trumpets if he had), from the faith of his Indian forefathers. It is indeed characteristic of Oriental tolerance that such a monarch as P'rakram' should thus have revered and fostered the faith of the land while adhering to his own : and, no less, that so omnipotent a Church as that of Lanka should have not only have accepted the benefactions of an infidel, but also have allowed his own shrines to stand so close to the churches of the True Faith. The answer to this, of course, would be that no man who does good can possibly be an infidel to any Buddhist, for, to us, all followers of righteousness and all doers of kind, generous deeds are, *ipso facto*, Buddhists and True Followers of the True Way, although they may not know it, may never have heard of the Most Perfect One, may call their Way after some earlier or later Revealer, whose teaching, in so far as it is gentle and good and happy, resumes, however incompletely, the utterly perfect teaching of the Supreme Buddha. But not even P'rakram' the Magnificent would

set his Sivite shrine on the holy enclosure of the Preaching-hall, the Thûparâma, the Wata-dâ-Gé; for, though we may roughly call that vast raised square the citadel, it is in reality more properly the Parvis, the Temenos, of the sacred buildings thus collected on its pavement. Most holy are all the edifices that are there gathered together. Somehow or other the Sat Mahal Prasada itself must have been endowed with sanctity—indeed, was no doubt a holy place of Cambodian Buddhism—but the Siva Kovil of the Hindu King must needs take a lowlier place, and not thrust itself among the sacred churches of the Faith.

Back through brake and tangle to the road in the grey dusk. Now light is gone from the world, and colour has faded into obscurity. Silence holds the tideless ocean of jungle that closes hard in on every side upon the ruined city and the weed-choked lake. Only in the gloaming leaping chains of monkeys go surging across the wave-crests of the tree-tops, with a roaring swish of surf on shingle; and, very far away, haunting melancholy peacocks wail from the uttermost woodland—reincarations of the peacocks that once roamed the careful sward in the Nandana Park of the Great King. So I win back at last through all the phantoms of the forest, filled with ominous abysses of darkness, in which dead things lurk for their spring, and the thoughts of bygone Kings hover sadly in the recesses of the night. In the bungalow I make my sketchy meal on the tinned bones that one still has to bring for oneself to Polonnarua in default of any Rest-house or Rest-house chicken; and so to bed, undistracted from meditation by any excess of food, to sleep on an iron bedstead, over which has been laid one thin and mouldy mattress, stuffed apparently with cocoanuts. Never can I be sufficiently grateful to our own authorities for allowing me the shelter of their roof; the rest of my entertain-

ment I owe to the efforts of my servant among the native authorities of the village ; and, therefore, as the mattress, I gathered afterwards, had been the playground of coolies for some months, I may fairly remark on its shortcomings. Let a veil fall over that night. Suffice it to say that I rose from that iron bed-frame with my body patterned out in squares of blue and green bruises, like some rough design for a plaid shawl. I felt as if I had been restlessly rehearsing for St. Lawrence through some twenty centuries of tossing on his gridiron, and wished that Hans Andersen's Princess had had my experience. We should not have heard so much about that parched pea if she had. Anyhow, I would sleep a month in nettles on a bed of stones to see Polonnarua. These trials have their comic force, and are very profitable to undergo, if only for the fun of laughing them over afterwards, and seeing them in memory a hundred times more grotesquely horrible than ever they were.

In the early, misty, steamy morning I am summoned by my servant to sally forth amid the remaining marvels. I am buckled and tied into jungle kit, and so at the heel of a nimble coolie step out into the young daylight. First of all our way lies along the road that had seemed so thickly haunted the night before ; and now it is plain, modern, prosaic. On the bund of Topavewa to our left rise a few inhabited bungalows, whose compounds are brilliant with the flames of Spathodea. The levels below are green and pleasant, covering the débris of many a street and house from P'rakram's capital. On our right rises the jungle sea, curling over us from the hilltop in a curling crest of green, through which the monkeys swoop and plunge and dive. We pass on and on, leaving the "citadel" to our right, with the ruined buildings all aglow in the hot daylight, rising from the crowded jewellery of

the dew. But such august relics should always be visited at sundown or dusk: thus alone does one feel the full soul of their desolate presence, their glory, their ruin, the evanescence of their fabric, the permanence of their spirit. In the harsh day they are mere wreckage, stone and brick and plaster, put definitely up by definite persons on definite terms, and then definitely reduced to their component parts and left lying. In the gloaming, though, they are themselves—visible spirits of bygone things, time-worn corpses, or husks deserted, of holy thoughts, hopes, and happinesses that have long since moved on and passed into other manifestations.

Then our way diverges through the right, through a deep forest of glades and twilights and gnarled ancient trees, round which nestle coppices of lesser growths. Silvered and soaking are all the leaves with dew, weighted, glossy, drooping. The long wild grass is starred with little flowers, and in the thicker copse are beds of a big palmate aroid whose blossoms have given place to coral-line fruits of a dazzling scarlet, hugging the ground at the base of the yellowing foliage. Through glen after glen the gaze wanders on into distance beyond distance of light and soft shadow, all filled with the blue films of early dewy morning. Then in a clearing looms a tall grey shape, and we come upon the Vishnu Dewâlé, lying in its small sunken area like its cousin, the so-called Daladá Mâligawa.

For the Vishnu Dewâlé is also a Sivite shrine, though it has long since lost the name it bore in the days of P'rakram', the devout Hindu. It is more perfect even than the Siva-Kovil, and its domed roof still hangs intact, though shrubs are sprouting from the blocks that piece it together. This has the refined proportions of its cousin, yet seems much taller, owing to the persist-

ence of the dome; but, to my thinking, it has not quite the dainty beauty of the Daladá Mâligawa, delicate though it is. But, then, I have trudged through the morning in anticipation of this. The Daladá Mâligawa, though I knew it was there, yet came upon me unexpectedly in the twilight with all the glamour of a lovely ghost. Expectation and the glare of morning cannot compete with surprise and the rich illusion of evening. The most touching things about the abandoned Vishnu Dewâlé are two small sacred bulls of stone that have been collected from the wreckage and laid side by side in front of the shrine. There are many others about, headless and mutilated, but these two have been thus set apart and in prominence on the bare earth; and there they sit, humped, meek, perennially placid, their gentle stupid little faces gazing out across the impenetrable tangles of the jungle no less blankly and impassively than once they gazed across all the crowded golden splendours of the King's royal city. They have a look of child-like astonishment, of a great surprised submission. Holy things no longer holy in the place of their former worship, they gaze pathetically over the theatre of their triumph, now turned a waste of weeds—mild Brahminy bulls, indeed, in shape and attitude and resigned calm glance, but also touched with something of the Divine spirit, for ever young, for ever filled with the complacency of things eternal, safe from submersion and change in the shoreless Ocean of Transience, which is the Sea of Birth and Death.

From the Vishnu Dewâlé the track retraces its steps awhile; then it fares forward anew into the glades and coppices of the jungle. After a time of tramping and picking one's way amid the brake, there appears, high over the high trees beyond, a towering cylindrical spire, rung on rung of ancient brickwork. In another moment we emerge

into a long clearing of a mile or more, up and down which lie scattered the greatest buildings of P'rakram' Bahu; and from midway in the path we face downwards towards the spire, half a mile away perhaps. A huge mound of grass and shrub and herbage shows the mass that was once a rounded white dome, all glossy snow of plaster, enriched with glaze and gold. Above this stands a large square base or high pedestal of brickwork, whose upper surface and shoulders are now all a fur of long grass and greenery, drooping and weeping over the rim ; and from this base, set on a thin stem or neck, expands and soars the spire—a tall, truncated cone of rounded ring on ring of brickwork, diminishing as it rises. And this is our first sight of a big dâgaba, of one whose dome seems now a high natural mountain in the jungle, and only tee and spire the work of man. Yet all that height is the work of pious hands in the long ago, and the four obliterated altars at the four cardinal points round the wooded base, which are now but dim caverns and beast-lairs of the wild jungle, were once crowded with holy men and women at their daily pleasure of praise. As was the dâgaba of the Relic at Kandy, so is the design of this, multiplied by a hundred ; as this is, but multiplied by almost as much again, are the royal dâgabas of Abhayagiriya and Jétavánarâma.

Lonely now, grass-grown, from its mount of verdure the naked spire goes soaring high against the clear blue of the morning. Once, when the whole shrine was a-glitter with whiteness and gold, the tee and spire were cased in precious metals and rich colours ; now everything is fallen, the splendour stripped away, and only the core of brickwork remains to show the magnificence of the original scheme. Look well and carefully on this ruin, then, all ye that care for righteousness, and have regard for the impermanence of works and the permanence of

their intention ; for, in all probability, this Rankot Vihara, as they call it to-day, is the Great Golden Thupa of Rupavati the Queen, set up, you remember, "to be as a ship of gold conveying her over the sea of transience to the utter Peace of the further shore, which is Nirvana." Let us be sure that the golden ship only became bare and derelict on the return journey, and that the soul of the Queen has long since reached its happy term.

A delightful woman she must have been, Rupavati the Queen, that cultivated dancer and musician, whose rich mind was keen as a blade of grass ; no dolt evidently, no squaw-woman of Oriental convention, but a very living soul whom it would have been a pleasure to meet and know. And she was evidently an undistracted follower of the Way; a faithful Churchwoman, of whose ardour for the serving of the Buddhas her husband, the Hindu P'rakram', evidently made politic use. She must undoubtedly, with her devoutness, have been of high value to him in public affairs, besides having that clever tongue and "a heart abounding in real charity and generosity." So, after these many centuries, the spirit of her good deeds still lives, as the spirit of all good deeds must endure—for ever. And Rankot Vihara still stands pointing a way from earth and its vain sorrows. Gone are its trappings of glory ; only remain the holy heart and thought with which it was offered. And so with Queen Rupavati. Stripped is she now of her queenship, her gold and her jewels; she only lives, and lives for ever, as a noble and pleasant thought, released at last from the turmoil of life and death.

Carrying with us, then, the fragrance of that dead Queen, let us bid farewell to Rankot Vihara, and turn our faces in the opposite direction. There, at the end of that cleared alley in the jungle, looms a long mass, vast and high, of

red brick, from which the plaster is still falling and peeling. This is the Jétavánarâma of Polonnarua, mightiest church in the city. Very different is this big building from the dâgaba of the same name at Anuradhapura ; for all these holy places take their title from that very holy Jétavána in India, where the Lord Buddha so often made His dwelling. The Jétavánarâma of Polonnarua is most impressive from its entrance. You may stand, if you will, on a little mound of old stone pillars exactly opposite the main entrance, and gaze straight up, now, into the very holiest of holies, bare to the day. The building is cruciform, exactly like that of a Christian church, with central aisle and transepts. The walls are still practically perfect, and even the plaster with which they are covered is still so well preserved that one may follow the design of their mouldings. They are rich with emblems—geese and dwarfs and other associations of very long ago ; and they offer, too, representations of royal Cinhalese palaces of old time, so that one may draw thence some notion of the domed, many-storied splendours that now we can only lamely guess from the forest of stone blocks which is our sole reminder of the Brazen Palace, or the Monara Pirivena.

The main entrance of the Jétavánarâma is no less magnificent than its general design. Through towering polygonal towers, crusted with symbol and ornament, one passes straight up into the nave. And the Jétavánarâma is worthy of such an entrance. Crumbling, collapsing, naked and decayed, it has a looming mouldering splendour, abandoned there in the jungle, with wild woodland hemming it in on every side for mile after mile. The roof has fallen long since into the aisle, and over all and into every cranny have sprouted the weeds of many seasons. The whole interior is heaped high with débris, and over-

grown for many generations with long lush growth of grass. So one advances, scaling the steep ascent of herbage, and into the dripping dew-wet jungle of the interior. The long Latin cross of the building faces east and west, and there against the western end, looking eternally out towards the dawn, appears the phantom of what was once the tenant of the shrine. Towering erect in benediction, there stood there in old times a colossal figure of Our Lord Buddha, built up of brick, and then, no doubt, enriched as befitted the wealth of the Church and the munificence of the King. Probably in the lantern-tower there was a window, shedding a broad beam of light from the east upon the Blessed Face very high up in the scented darkness of the chancel. But whatever tower or dome there may ever have been at the junction of aisle and transepts is now clean gone—the western wall stands naked to the day ; and gone, too, is the colossal figure of Our Lord ; for, curious and ghostly, the brickwork of the image has crumbled, peeled and fallen, till only against its background can be seen the outline of that mighty form, like the silhouette, in smoke and grime, of a burned body against a wall. And yet, maimed, deformed, ruined, the holiness and the majesty can be discerned as clearly as ever—perhaps even more clearly than before.

For completeness of achievement is sometimes enemy to completeness of realization, and the highest art achieves its end by leaving work for our imaginations. A woman, for instance, went up long ago on to a city wall; her face was veiled with a linen wimple, and a big tear stood on her cheek, and the elders of the city said that her face was like that of an immortal spirit. That is all—that is absolutely all; yet from that bare suggestion the beauty of the divine Helena thrills down the ages like a living fragrance—something consummating, quintessential, un-

alterable; so powerful is the touch that stimulates imagination without satisfying it. And here, too, blurred and obscured, the ineffable smile is more radiant than ever on the lips of a complete and cherished image. Through imperfection and decay there beams more clearly than before the Utter Perfection, the Holiness for ever beyond reach of decay. Almost all the face is gone; wild lizards frisk their tails over the sun-baked wall against which the figure is built, or play their hide-and-seek in the weed-grown crannies of background and colossus alike; but the Saviour stands there mysteriously revealed in all His loveliness as never at Dambûlla or Gadaladéniya, and the abraded brickwork of the countenance hints at a smile more radiant, more universal and eternal, than any flawless lips ever carved by Pheidias. For into the imperfect we each must put the greater or the less—that is, ourselves. With the perfect we have no more concern, and need not trouble. This was the secret of psychology that wise old Lionardo grasped when he gave Ferronière and Gioconda that haunting smile—incomplete, wayward, elusive: challenging every one of us to exert himself after an explanation and an answer of his own to the emotional problem of that glance. And that same rewarding defiance will you find, if you will, in the obliterated, marred face of the Buddha at Jétavánarâma. And, of course, if you have the wrong spirit, you will see here only an ugly old image defaced and smashed and faded out of all recognition.

So the Perfect One still smiles out across the trackless desolation that was once the royal city. There is none here now, one thinks, for him to smile upon or bless. Deep and deep into the green wetness of the aisle one wades. Here the high walls give shadow, and the sun has not yet been able to call back the dew to himself. Not only grass, but dense growth of shrub is here, and

the vegetation rises above one's knee as one battles onwards. The piled ground is steepest just below where the central tower must have stood; thence it falls away in a deep hollow towards the western wall, with its crumbled statue. And there, on a chance flat stone, there in the very heart of the tumbled wilderness, with waves of jungle-grass all around, lie arrayed, as on an opportune altar, a few sweet temple-flowers offered up to the Buddha, once adored with jewels by King and Queen and abbot. Whose was the pious thought? what simple heart was it that did this honour to the loneliness of Jétavánarâma? Here, in the limitless wastes of the jungle the offering seems a miracle. And the sight, under the pitiless blue, between the high red ruins of the church, amid the luxuriance of the herbage with which now it overflows, is strong medicine for all thoughts of sorrow and distrust. It is good—it is very beautiful and good—to have seen this thing. I would rather have seen this innocent trifling service amid the lost ruins than an Emperor offering up his diadem in state before the altar of the Holy Wisdom. Even so would we all, and Another, have seen a certain poor widow parting with her mites, than every Jew in Bayswater writing cheques to swell the coffers of a hospital. Surely as those mites, in the eyes of the Eternal, outweighed a King's ransom, so these withering flowers have more value than jewels or gold, and bloom for ever on the "Great Infinite Compassionate Heart" to whom they are thus simply offered.

So one climbs down again under the towering aisles of Jétavánarâma, broken and collapsing, through the flanking turrets of the entrance, and out on to the green grass beyond, where now is only a meadow of herbage, but formerly a rich pavement and approach. Close beyond the Jétavánarâma stands the ruined dâgaba called

Kiri Véhéra, a vast naked bell or cloche of brickwork, cracked and rent, with weeds and shrub still busy in widening its clefts. Not only the overlay of glazed white chûnam plaster, but also the tee and the spire, are gone from Kiri Véhéra; nothing remains but the rounded drum. And this, close under the northern wall of Jétavánarâma, is dwarfed to insignificance by that mouldering splendour so near at hand; nor can it sustain any comparison in size or grandeur with the Rankot Vihara, a mile away—the Golden Thûpa of the Queen.

But it is here that one realizes, between Kiri Véhéra and overshadowing Jétavánarâma, what must have been the royal city of P'rakram' Bahu the First. For it was a city of brick and plaster; its fine buildings are of materials no more rich or perdurable, and now their ruins owe much of their effect to their isolation in the wild jungle, but in themselves, as a matter of fact, are not so fine or imposing as would be the desolate frontage and riven dome of Harrod's Stores, after half a dozen centuries of abandonment had gone over it, and many generations of neglect allowed the oak and ash to run riot in its crevices. P'rakram' Bahu did his wonderful best, but he could not hope to rival Anuradhapura. In the old Sacred City now everything is a suggestion; at Polonnarua still stand realizations. And thus Polonnarua, with so much more to see in actual sight, has greater attraction for lovers of the easy than Anuradhapura, where there is everything to see for oneself in imagination. Polonnarua offers us plain obvious facts; Anuradhapura stimulates us to re-creation of vanished glories far richer than any spectacle to be seen in the younger capital. For Polonnarua was the triumph of lath and plaster, stucco and veneer; in its time it must have been regal; even to-day its remains have solidity and interest. Yet any modern town could beat Polon-

narua—except, perhaps, the Watà-dâ-Gé; but it would take a very marvellous modern town to beat sacred Anuradhapura as it stood, all flashing gold and wrought stone, in the days of its magnificence.

From Kiri Véhéra the track leads onwards through glade after glade of the jungle, until at last the way comes out upon another broad clearing. In front there stretches a long precipitous brow of black rock, opposite to which there slopes down a shallow incline of the same. And gigantic presences loom upon us from that ashen cliff. Seated and throned in glory, a great figure of the Buddha smiles upon our approach. He is carved from the living bluff in full relief; above him and around, on the stone behind, are worked a thousand elaborate decorations of his throne and canopy. His face, though, worn with the years, is grim and harsh; gladly the eye passes on to the central shrine, where a small chamber has been quarried in the solid cliff, supported at its porch on four squared pillars with capitals of carving. Within, above His altar, sits a small image of the Perfect One, who no more fails here than at Jétavánarâma of His faithful cult. Beyond the shrine rises the rock-cut group which has made the Gal Vihara famous. As we approach we can only see profiled a colossal standing figure, with something like a gigantic Rugby football at its feet; then as we pass the shrine, and cross the flower-studded marsh before it, that once was the flagged floor of the church, we come into sight of the whole.

To get a good view—for the figures are so enormous—it is necessary to climb the rocky acclivity of smooth ridges that faces the carved cliff; and thus you get the full majesty of the composition. For there, lying extended in the final trance, lies the Lord Gautama, a tremendous figure five-and-forty feet from end to end. In the moment

of the Mahaparinibban all the tired muscles are relaxed, and the left arm lies wearily along the body, following its curve. The head lies pillowed on the right hand, the quiet face looks unseeing out across the rocks; filled with the tranquillity of the Great Release is the atmosphere; grand and simple is this wrought holiness in stone—more grand because more simple than many another colossal Buddha, cased in colour and plaster and gilding, enshrined in the fragrant darkness of a church. Even so in his good time must once, in all probability, have been the Buddha of Gal Vihara. At least, this is the strongest theory, though it is hard to understand how the lie of the strata can ever have admitted the erection of a building over these figures, at such an angle does the stone-slope lean to the cliff. However, what roof there may have been is beyond guessing; the Buddha achieves his quest in the full light of day, with blue sky overhead, the black cliff behind, and all around the heavy greens of the jungle. Before him, in the hollow, stretch puddles and muddy flats bejewelled with little flowers of pure turquoise; and there, in that loneliness, in that desolation of naked rock, one realizes faintly and afar the majesty of the Great Entrance into Nirvana.

But even more beautiful than the recumbent Buddha, is the colossus that stands so close. Carved in almost complete relief, the figure towers high against the cliff, with gaze averted from the dying majesty at his feet. The hands are folded, the head inclined; the flame of the Holy Spirit on his brow has been planed clean off by some catastrophe. But the marred face has a loveliness above that of all other statues in Ceylon. Rain and lichen and storms have had their will of it for many centuries, but their only will has been to lend the mouth a sweet wistfulness that it can never have

had in the days when it was moulded and shapely, finished with stucco and scarlet. The bent, sad head, the tender melancholy of the smile, give a strange living force to the figure—kindly, whimsical, humorous, resigned, serene, and compassionate. There is in it, I think, no mourning for the passing of the Utter Perfection at his feet; it is well for him that Our Lord should have gone to His rest. No selfish regret is visible—nothing but a triumphant serenity, tinged with a clear and pitiful sense of the world's vain sufferings and striving after false joys that only bring bitterness. Some people say that here is Ananda the Well-beloved, standing sadly at the head of his dying Friend—the Best Friend of All the World—in that consummating scene at Kusinara; so the ascription goes, but without any authority. To me that figure is not Ananda the disciple, but Maitreya Who is to Come. Often thus in Cinhalese shrines does the Comforter of the future stand at the head of the passing Saviour, and here there is perfect fitness. So, his smile pregnant with tender compassionate knowledge of all the world's follies and miseries that must elapse and rage before his Advent, the Buddha To Be has his place at the head of the Buddha that is gone; and the smile of Maitreya Bodhisatta, beneath the black cliff of Gal Vihara, epitomizes all the delusions of earth, so pitiful, so evanescent, that must swirl and fade, as vapours, in the long waste of gloom that lies between each searchlight of illumination swept over all the fields of existence by the Buddhas as they come and go, flashing like revolving lighthouse-beams cast across the darkness by the Supreme Light. Receding down the past goes the glow and glory of Gautama, dimmed and veiled in these latter days by the dense human atmosphere of desire and selfishness that rises thick from all the many generations that lie between His day and ours; dimly, and very

far away up the future, gleams approaching the dazzling radiance of Maitreya. And the patient colossus of Gal Vihara, with bent head and folded hands, has all the double sense of what is gone and what is to come ; there is sadness in him, perhaps—tender and catholic, not grievous nor personal—but also there is the high hope, the high certainty, that enables him still to smile across the desolate, unhappy tract of ages in which no Completed Soul returns to help his innumerable brother Buddhas still blindly struggling through the veil of the flesh.

Fierce blue sky, dense hanging green of the jungle, time-worn blackness of the smooth cliff against which they stand, all combine to give these figures an impressive majesty, an almost frightening weight of silence and attentiveness. Their patience is infinite, but they are awaiting an end that will surely come in the fulness of time. So leave we these tranced holinesses there in the heart of the forest ; our road leads back now to the bund and the bungalow, for there is not time to wander on and on to where another Jétavánarâma-mass of brick and plaster is called the Great Thûpa of the Tamils, and lies, with statues and frescoes almost undamaged, beneath its collapsed roof, close under a vast rounded dome of forest, that rises abruptly and unexpectedly from the jungle plain. But the ruin is not the Thûpa of the Tamils ; the Great Thûpa is that mound of woodland, the lines of whose building have long been lost, and its very name not lost indeed, but transferred to the small neighbouring shrine. And all the jungle here is filled with ruins, yet unexplored, from the royal city of P'rakram' Bahu. So, past the real citadel, on the Bund of Topavewa, with its fallen council-hall and thrones and pillars, we return at last to the bungalow, and thence are pitilessly conveyed

onwards down the embankment of the lake to see the statue of the King.

Solid and orderly is the embankment of the lake ; but its sluices are gone to ruin, and now will never be restored. The water is so thick with growth of weed and lily that the whole expanse is liker a green lush field or marsh than a deep lake that once gave drink and baths to a city. So the footpath continues down the bund in the glaring mid-day, past bay and inlet where the water-lilies stand thick as stars at midnight. Far across the choked plain of the lake lies the rolling sea of the jungle, and beyond that, sapphire in the distance, roll the Kandyan ranges, remote and beautiful. Here and there the shore is fringed with drift-wood ; from some floating mass of green leaves a snow-white heron goes flapping lazily across the blue, and from some dead log by the shore another dead log, gnarled and bossy, comes suddenly to life, shambles lazily on for a few steps, then drops into the lake with a leaden plunge :—and we have seen a crocodile. Beware, all you that would bathe amid the water-lilies of Topavewa. So, then, at last, when heat and weariness are at their height, we turn aside and up a slope of rocks to where, on a huge boulder, has been carved in deep relief the figure of a tall old man holding a scroll. They call this P'rakram' Bahu ; but there is no sort of reason to suppose it is he. There is, indeed, something unnecessary and irrelevant about this colossus carved from an isolated rock, with no signs of shrine or worship anywhere round. True, there is a holy ruin not far beyond, and ruins all the way, but the ancient sage stands by himself, and turns his rather forbidding bearded face away from the royal city. There is no discovering who he was nor why he is here. So we turn and retrace our steps to the bungalow.

And now the horses are yoked, and we must set out

with no more delay if we are to reach our night's rest at Habarane before dark. Hastily, then, through the lazy golden glow, we drive out of Polonnarua, saying farewell to the stately buildings gathered on the sacred enclosure. Into the jungle behind us they fade, Thûparâma and lovely Wata-dâ-Gé. The cubed tower of the Sat Mahal Prasada passes behind the branches, and once more the abandoned shrines are left to the tenancy of grey ape and cobra king. For, dim relic of ancient serpent-cults, the snake is appointed guardian to all these shrines of the Buddha, and magical serpents and serpent-monarchs loom large in the folk-lore and mythology of Ceylon. And yet this veneration has to fight the tradition that only the cat and the venomous serpent omitted to shed tears at the Passing of the Lord Buddha from earth. From how many Japanese pictures of the Great Entrance into Nirvana—the Nehan-zo—have I not seen the snake curling unconcernedly in the foreground, while all heaven and earth are weeping round the extended body: and fat little dappled pussy sitting with her back turned plump on the mourning multitudes, staring straight out of the picture with an expression of high-nosed and obese indifference? In reward for which the cat, in Japanese lore, is a demon, unless you amputate her tail; but the cobra retains in the East his primeval sacrosanctity, and, where once he was the object of worship himself, has sunk to become the guardian of the shrine.

And now evening is closing, red and lurid, on our way. The vast silence of the jungle twilight is heavy upon us, as we wearily traverse the difficult sandy miles. And then, in a moment, it seems, twilight deepens to dusk, the glow passes, and black night is over the world. And a night so black that all other blacks are pallid grey. Deep, deep, deep is the jungle darkness—deeper than Romney's

black velvet—palpable, awful. We go at a foot's pace, our lanterns carving faint, advancing haloes of light as we go. And in the dense obscurity one has a feeling of detachment from earth ; we are back in chaos, swinging through the primal void. The journey is phantasmal, ghostly. And over all the trees, outlining their motionless masses, and starring all their depths, are countless myriads of fireflies, that quiver now and then, and dart and shift. And so, through impenetrable gloom, in which there is no longer earth nor heaven, if it were not for those phosphorescent Christmas-trees on either hand, we advance softly, soundlessly, unreally through the breathless huge silence of the jungle night, and come at last, crawling and exhausted, into the sleeping village of Habarane. Like ghosts its lights approach us ; they seem to be moving, and not we. It is impossible that we can be moving, so noiseless is the world, so utterly solid and unalterable the dark.

CHAPTER XII

KÁLAVEWA, AWKANA, AND THE SACRED CITY

It was in the year 1215 that Magha the invader laid waste the kingdom and the royal city. It is not likely that Polonnarua ever recovered anything of its former grandeur after this. During the welter of rivalries and revolts that filled the ensuing years a strong Cinhalese Prince, bearing the auspicious name of Vijaya, came by degrees to be recognized as King. But he reigned at Dambadéniya, for the capital was ruined and helpless. He was succeeded about 1238 by his son, P'rakram' Bahu the Second, who proved a successful and a pious ruler. It was he who built a vihara at Kandy, which thus and here makes its first definite appearance on the stage of Cinhalese history ; but especially was King P'rakram' concerned with the fate of the Great Relics. On perceiving the approaching sack of Polonnarua, the monks and abbots had prudently removed the Alms-Bowl and the Tooth from their shrines, and had buried them secretly on Kotmalé Mountain ; and then, after this, little mattered the fate of Polonnarua. But in a few more years King Vijaya established his sovereignty, and then, with feasting and state, the land being now secure, the King uncovered the Holy Things, and carried them to Beligala, where he enshrined them splendidly. Then succeeded P'rakram' Bahu the Second, who removed the Tooth-Relic yet again from Beligala to Dambadéniya, where he had made it a

Temple; and at last, having pacified the country and purified the priesthood, King P'rakram' bethought him of his predecessor's work, and sent one of his Princes to report on the old royal city of Polonnarua.

And thus did the Prince Vijaya Bahu report on the capital, hardly fifty years after the death of P'rakram' Bahu the Great: "In the city there are now churches, palaces, abbeys, castles, preaching-halls, temples, and all such-like. Some of these are still standing, although the trees of the forest have now grown up and engulphed them. Others are collapsing because their pillars are rotten and unable to support them. Yet others, alas! are bent down with the weight of huge walls split from top to bottom, and are falling because there is nothing to bear them up. Sad indeed it is to see the rest unable to stand by reason of weakness and decay, tottering every day like aged men to their fall. The ridge-rafters of some are broken, and their beam-ends ruined. The roofs of some are fallen and their tiles all broken. Sometimes the cracked tiles have slipped through the breached roof; of others only the walls and pillars remain. The gates of some are gone, and the door-posts shifted this way and that. The staircases are loose, and the galleries collapse. Of some buildings only the signs of their foundation remain, and of others not even so much as a trace is left. What further need is there of description?"

So Polonnarua was gone, and P'rakram' the Second made no vain effort to restore the work of P'rakram' the First. Instead, he made his seat at Dambadéniya; and at Kandy, after a notable miracle had been wrought for him, he enshrined the Tooth and the Alms-Bowl in due devotion, and thus these holy things came to their final resting-place. The King, too, composed them a ritual, and ordered their reverent showing to the people on appointed

days. Bridges also and roads did good King P'rakram' restore, and so at last went to his reward, and Vijaya Bahu his son succeeded to the throne. It was he who had made the official report on Polonnarua, and in his brief reign the executive returned for a few seasons to the royal city of P'rakram' the Great. Not only did the King do his best for the restoration of Polonnarua, but he also gave attention to the clearing and the repairing of the ancient Sacred City of Anuradhapura. But it was little that the best of Kings could do, for, thanks to invasion, distraction, and uncertainty, the Northern Kingdom, like the palaces of Polonnarua, was tottering day by day to its end. Long had Anuradhapura been abandoned to the jungle: the turn of Polonnarua came in the reign of P'rakram' Bahu the Third, nephew of Vijaya the Restorer. Already Vijaya's own brother found himself obliged to abandon Polonnarua for the rock fortress of Yâpahu; and his son, P'rakram' the Third, was the last sovereign to reign in Polonnarua. After his five years' sovereignty, the capital of P'rakram' the Great was abandoned finally and for ever. In 1293 Polonnarua was left to the lordship of the jungle, and the executive removed to safer Kurunegala. Thence it was driven, in 1347, to Gampola, and thence again to Kotte in 1351. At Kotte it rested on its flight for a hundred years or so, and then, in 1542, the year of Queen Katharine Howard's execution, it removed once more to Sitavaka, and from Sitavaka it took its last flight in 1592, and settled in the high eyrie of Kandy in the mountains, where it remained, a circumscribed and dwindling royalty, until its extinction by the English in 1798. And the year 1293 marks, with the death of P'rakram' the Third, the definite and hopeless abandonment of the old Northern Kingdom in the plains. From that hour even Polonnarua was forgotten, and Anurad-

hapura left utterly desolate, were it not for the scanty monks that still tended the Holy Tree. Jungle grew inextricably up over park and palace and meadow. From the end of the thirteenth century wild beasts and impenetrable forest covered all the vast acreage of the Northern Plain, until the dawning interest of the nineteenth century recalled the existence of Anuradhapura, and then came, almost unexpectedly, with a start of surprise, upon the magnificent ruins of Polonnarua in the uttermost wilderness.

And so the story, looking forward from the fall of Polonnarua, is only one of sorrow and decay. Fortunately, our journey now lies backwards into the past, into the great holy days of Duttha Gamini and Buddhadása; for from Polonnarua we are travelling steadily up the years, past Sigiri's majesty of the sixth century, past the creation of Kalavewa in the fifth, to all the sacred places of Anuradhapura, whose sanctity and glory begin with the far-away centuries before our era, not three hundred years after the Final Passing away of the Most Perfect One. To reach Kalavewa, as the by-way is up, we have to take a long detour; for, instead of one side, we have to tackle two, and the two longest, of an immense triangle. Our present road, from which we diverge at Habarane for Polonnarua, would carry us far on the sea at Trincomalee. To reach the road to the Sacred City we shall have to return almost to Dambûlla again, and strike the left-hand line of the triangle.

So, having slept a weary night at Habarane, where sleep was a mere annoying pretence, so devastating was the slate-pencil chorus of five hundred million cicalas all singing different discords as loud as they could in different times and different keys through all the forest round the Rest-house, our time arrives to set out once more on the

smooth highway. But I am hardly qualified to write happy things about the journey back from Habarane towards Dambûlla. In the first place, a retracing of one's steps is always a depressing performance; in the second, having eaten jungle-honey at Sigiri and found it the most delicious thing ever invented by Nature, I had agitated successfully—magnaque numinibus vota exaudita malignis—to obtain it again at Habarane.

Now, jungle-honey, limpid in the comb, is fragrant and sweet with all the sweet fragrance of the hot jungle, and is a pleasure to be remembered through a score of after-years, and this I was determined to enjoy wherever opportunity afforded. So at Habarane I had demanded it through my servant. I had imagined that nothing could be more easy of accomplishment, and was surprised at the elaborate machinery of written orders and ceremonial that seemed necessary. However, at last arrived my jungle-honey; but alas! instead of being a primitive delicious comb, sparkling and amber, it came a dense brown glue, sluggishly pouring from the depths of an unclean medicine-bottle, which had been half-filled with this disappointing visc. However, not to damage the headman's feelings, and not to lose all joy myself, I saved what I could from the wreckage of my hopes, and piously sipped the honey from a spoon; and it was very nasty, tepid, and heavily cloying. But the worst was to come. In my innocence I had eaten of jungle-honey no longer fresh; and while jungle-honey fresh in the comb is heartening and wholesome and delicious, jungle-honey kept overnight, in any way deflowered of its first freshness, is not only nasty, but also an efficacious poison. Accordingly, all the way back towards Dambûlla I agonized, and desperately tried to meditate the evanescence and unreality of such agonies, and counted the weary milestones as one that dimly

notices the milestones of his own funeral journey. Ultimately, after we had reached the diverging of the ways, exhaustion came with recovery; I nodded drunkenly and slept, only to wake in the latter hours of a grey afternoon, with a fine mizzle giving the lie to the promise of a cloudless morning.

Glorious hitherto had been the six days of my Odyssey, and as I had already seen all the most important places of my quest, I respected the tact of the weather in thus only breaking when I was within two days of my journey's end; and the mizzle gave a freshness to the air as I woke, cured, from my slumbers, to gaze across the placid cultivated lands that lie between Dambûlla and Kekirawa. Very beautiful are these lands indeed. The jungle has been swept away, and population dwells along the roadside, in hovel and hamlet, subsisting on the rich rice-fields that cover the levels. In the cool grey light of a clouded afternoon the brilliant green of the rice gains an added poignancy, and, from the broad expanses of water that occur here and there along the way, stand up in dense crowds the starry cups of Nymphæa, white and large in one sort, small and blue in another. And so, through village after village, embowered in spreading shade-trees, we come at last up a long gentle slope to the Rest-house of Kekirawa, where we are to spend the night. And a happy rest it was, too, for some kind heart had left a readable novel in the cupboard drawer, and, as I sat enjoying it in the veranda through the gloaming, there came wandering a kitten with the most fearful fiery eyes I have ever seen. They were all tapetum, balls of emerald fire that clove the twilight like motor-lamps. As the little thing came walking down the path, there was no kitten, no animal, no living thing: there were just two shafts of flame, attended by a small uncertain shadow. I felt, as I

watched their ominous ghastly brilliance, like the haunted hero of "The Carissima."

The seventh day of my wanderings is to be devoted to Kálavewa Water, whence I am to return and spend a second night at Kekirawa. A by-road leads over the country towards the famous lake, which lies some eight miles from Kekirawa. The way presents no notable feature, except, just before you reach the embankment, a few sacred ruins, and a splendid hedge of Dipladenias, all a riotous tangle of their rosy trumpets; then up an incline, and so out upon the embankment of Kálavewa.

Most magnificent of all the great lakes is Kálavewa, and most magnificent its embankment—a huge, high, solid mole of earth and stone, running for several miles across the country, pre-eminent over the flat jungle sea beneath it. Over the embankment, on its slopes of fine grass, grow towering specimen trees, each by itself, rare and splendid, like prized treasures in a well-kept botanical garden. Their trunks are hale and columnar; their spreading plumes of foliage dapple the steep with shade. Here, alone in Ceylon, I saw a fine tall thing of filmy leafage that might have been a pine, or cousin to a pine. To the left, as one drives along the bund, lies far below you, held in by the stone basal walls of the dam, the immense expanse of Kálavewa Water. Away and away into the remotest distance stretches the grey plain of the lake. Beyond its furthest shore rolls the placid crest of the jungle, billowing over the world until its tide goes breaking against the Kandyan Mountains, and the isolated ridges that star the jungle-sea to the northward with their peaked islets. Across the hill-country, in intervals of blue, trail sweeping veils of rain, that blur the ranges, and pass and travel like brown curtains of smoke over the far face of the forest. Huge clouds, violet, bronze, and ochre,

curl high over the mountain ranges, and move with majesty towards the north, revealing fresh spaces of azure and fresh pinnacles of purple in the roseate profundities of the distance.

And the lake which fills foreground and centre of all the picture is a plain of steel, haunted by strange spectres. Over its wide expanse stand crowded the bleached skeletons of huge dead trees, silver-white as human bones ; its shores are fringed densely with grey wreckage of timber, on which stand the water-tortoises in leaden immobility. And the phantom forest of death covers all the face of the lake ; its effect is ghastly—a nightmare. Dead in agony seem those stark old trees, and their skeletons still lift tormented bony arms to a regardless heaven. For in the long years that have passed since the final fall and oblivion of the Northern Kingdom the Kings of Lanka had no more care for Kálavewa ; the sluices grew choked, the dam gave way, the river took its old course, and Kálavewa ceased to be a lake. Then the forest entered on its heritage again, and usurped the whole basin of Dhatuséna's Tank. Trees grew thick and tall ; the jungle made the plain its own ; and then, in the course of centuries, there arose a generation and people that understood the Kings of long ago and their works. The English realized that to restore Ceylon you must first restore the lakes of its ancient monarchs. So they filled the gaps in the broken dam of Kálavewa and restored the sluices. Once more the vast lake revealed the intention of its maker, and all the interloping trees were killed by the influx of water. Now only remains to restore cultivation and population to the jungle-lands that cover the district, and we shall have once more the creation of Dhatuséna, that powerful and drastic monarch, towards the end of our fifth century.

And as one drives down the long embankment, towards the stonework of its main sluice, one understands at once the greatness and the unpopularity of Dhatuséna, the builder of Kálavewa. For the Gona River flows in almost a flat plain, and a little short dam did not suffice to make a lake. An embankment, high and stern and strong, must needs be built across the face of the country; and the main sluice is like a dockyard, huge and solid and wrought in squared blocks of stone. Its engineers spared neither money nor labour, it is clear, and that they had a sense of the work's importance is evident from the small shrines that still stand out upon the promontory of the sluice. And all this labour was forced, unpaid—the exhaustion of one generation for the benefit of succeeding ones. It is hardly wonderful that the exhausted generation hated the King who thus sacrificed it to his big dreams of futurity, and that Kasyapa the Parricide met with such universal acclamation when he raised the canopy of dominion against that strong and regardless good man Dhatuséna his father. For between the lines of the Mahavansa we can read that the deposition of Dhatuséna was as much a popular as a personal matter, brought about no less by general feeling than by the private animosity of the Commander-in-Chief, his nephew, or the flexible and unscrupulous ambition of Kasyapa, his son. Rarely indeed did a King use other than forced labour for his public works; and, therefore, for all mighty builders the nation had a double feeling: of pride in the buildings and their conceiver, of resentment against the pitiless egoism that consumed the people in their achievement. It is placed on special record by the Mahavansa that when Duttha Gamini built his dâgaba of Ruanwéli, he doubled his merits by giving all his workmen honest pay.

Perhaps, though, that small shrine standing upon the

promontory has another sadder meaning as an expiatory offering to lay a vexed ghost. For the building of Kálavewa, the greatest work of Dhatuséna, is inextricably tangled up in legend with his downfall and death. The Mahavansa does not commit itself unreservedly to the theory, but frankly prefaces the story with a "They say." For when this vigorous and impatient monarch—doer of so many splendid pieties that the chronicle can only set their number forth in bare outline—was busy with the making of Kálavewa Lake, the workmen were impeded in building the dam by a certain holy monk, who sat in imperturbable meditation on the very spot where earth and stone were to be dumped. No effort could rouse him from his learned contemplation. In vain they pleaded with him; he would not hear, but remained absorbed in contemplation, motionless as a graven image. And the King, every effort proving fruitless, grew impatient and lost his temper, and ordered the earth and stone to be dumped in the appointed spot all the same, regardless of the monk. So they poured their tons of rock and soil over the holy man, and buried him alive there in the embankment of Kálavewa. And our carriage-wheels still roll over the nameless spot where his bones lie hidden.

But because of that violent and ill-considered action, and through the imperfections of his temper that had wrought this crime, there came upon Dhatuséna, inevitably, the disaster, shame, and agony in which his reign so tragically concluded,—and all the direct results of that uncontrolled anger which he allowed to be more and more his master. And fittingly, too, Kálavewa becomes the culminating scene of the King's tragedy; for here—by the stone sluice, very likely, but at all events on this embankment—he held his last dialogue with his old friend, and was prevailed upon to eat, for the last time, the meat that he loved. It was

here that he went down into the waters of his lake, and bathed, and turned upon his tormentors with the splendid defiance that sealed his doom. If Sigiri is haunted by the spirit of Kasyapa, so brilliant yet so weak and malleable, the shore of Kálavewa is still held by the phantom of Dhatuséna, the strong ruler, whose strength was confounded utterly in the ruin brought upon him by his one betraying vice. So beautifully logical are always the dooms of men and women, Kings and Queens, mitred abbots or labourers of the field.

In point of fact, this same rash violence of temper appears again and again in the dynasty of Dhatuséna, either in the form of ill-considered anger or ill-considered abnegation. The most popular and successful along all lines, but for his fatal crime, was Kasyapa the Parricide. In the day of his rise the whole people was with him against his father; in the day of his fall the allegiance of army and nation remained unaltered, and only accident determined his disaster. Mogallana, the brother who dethroned him, gave signs of the family temper. He was pitiless to all who had abetted the dethronement of Dhatuséna and taken service with Kasyapa; he caused more than a thousand of them to be executed, mutilated others, and banished many more. So furious did he become that he gnashed his teeth in a frenzy, till one of them protruded for ever after, and won for its wearer the uncomplimentary title of "the Demon." The Demon was a pious man, though, and rebuilt the shrines, and remembered his father's last letter enjoining him to make the kindly charioteer a keeper of the King's gate. And his son Kumara Dhatuséna terminated nine years of sovereignty with a flourish of romance that is unique in history.

For in the royal city there dwelt a lovely lady of louder

fame than, according to Perikles, befits the ideal woman. She was, in fact, one of those eminent courtesans of the East whose society men frequent for refreshment of mind and body. And to her, regardless of propriety, did Kumara the King too frequently resort. One day the King wrote up a riddle on her wall, and offered a rich prize to anyone who should solve it. Now Kalidas, the illustrious poet, famous throughout the East, was yet in the heyday of life, and was also among the frequenters of this woman. So, scanning the riddle, he guessed the answer immediately, and declared it. But the courtesan, jealous of the reward, beguiled the poet, and murdered him, and buried the corpse in a secret place. Then she went and gave the answer of the riddle, and claimed the prize for her own. But all was soon discovered, and this wicked one fitly dealt with. And the corpse of the poet was laid in high state to be burned on a pile of fragrant woods and incense and precious things. So then the King, in royal splendour, went up on to the pyre of Kalidas, and there he slew himself with his sword, most precious of all sacrifices to the fame of the poet whose death his carelessness had caused. Thus the corpse of the King became the burnt-offering of the poet, and Kittiséna, his son, was King in his place. (But this unedifying tale of royal diversions is not to be found in the Mahavansa.)

After this a long, turbulent chronicle leads on to active Silaméghavanna, who tried so vainly to purify the monkhood, and died of the effort. His son Aggabodhi the Third (A.C. 623) had a stormy reign, coming and going on the steps of the throne. At one time he was displaced by Jetthatissa, who worsted the King and drove him in headlong flight to India. Then Jetthatissa ruled as sovereign, until at last Aggabodhi returned. A battle

ensued between the King-claimant and the King-regnant, and Jetthatissa, in his turn, was worsted. Seeing that all was lost, he spoke to the Prime Minister, who rode with him on his elephant, and ordered him to take a message to the Queen, and after that to do as he wished. And the message was that the Queen should retire to a convent, perfect herself in the Truth and the doctrine, and then, preaching them before the world, should credit the King too with the merit thus acquired. And so, having fought to the last possible moment of utter exhaustion, the vanquished sovereign plunged his knife into his throat, returned it to its sheath, and lay calmly down to die upon his elephant, as Kings should do, as the Parricide had done before him.

So the enemy triumphed, and the Prime Minister went off to the ex-Queen with her dead lord's message. And the good Queen shaved her head, and took the vows, and became a nun, well learned in the Truth and the doctrine (which shows that there were still convents in the seventh century of our era). So then, having learned the Way, she preached the same as the King had wished. And one day the Prime Minister was among her congregation; so, when the sermon was finished, the Queen-nun came down from her pulpit and sat by his side, and asked him, saying, "Tell me now, and show me, the manner of the King my husband's death." And the faithful man, on her request, sat down also before her, and drew his sword, and plunged it into his throat, and cast the sword away, and answered her, "Thus it was that the King your husband died." So there died he also upon that spot, and the Queen-nun, overpowered with sorrow at the sight, could not bear her grief: but her heart broke, and she gave up this troublous life.

Below the bund of Kálavewa all was once broad fertile

plain and cultivated land. Below the bund of Kálavewa now there is nothing but level jungle and wilderness, save where a new little hamlet squats by its rice-fields under the shadow of the great embankment. Down the steep slope, and through the compounds, and across the rice-fields, lies our path to what was once the splendid vihara of Awkana, perched high on its hillock, commanding all the land, and looking straight out, over miles of green luxuriant cultures, to the bund of the lake. Past the village lies our way, through scrub and coppice,—where big butterflies dart and flicker in flashes of black and white over the emerald marshes of rice,—tight-roping along the narrow raised path that leads between the sloughs. After that, turning at a stile and looking back across the fields along the path studded with fairy-like blue flowers, we have our last sight of the open country, the hamlet, and the embankment rising beyond. For now our way leads us through dense jungle into steaming darknesses and impenetrable twilight. So for hot mile on mile we roam through the forest, at last to emerge in the stony broad bed of a river.

Here there is coolth and shadow; brown and deep and delicious sleeps the water in dark rocky hollows; worn boulders stand smooth and humped and rounded where the river should flow in wetter seasons. Dead leaves and drift-wood are thick on the swirl of its vanished eddies, and lodge against the ledges of the rocks. Here and there overhead the shadow breaks, and rich streams of sunlight pour down, kindling the sere browns to orange, umber, and ochre. Blackly green stretch the spreading boughs above, and, from the silted earth by each promontory or bay, tall many-flowered Ismenes spray abroad the ghostly crown of their spidery white daffodils in the dim obscurities. Crossing this deep cool gully, shaded from

the hot day outside, we mount a slope that seems leading indefinitely upwards over slippery inclines of naked rock towards the summit of an unexpected hill. Climbing the last steps, we become aware of buildings set against vast boulders of black cliffs. A brand-new preaching-hall comes into view, and then, just over our horizon, tops the grasses a something odd in the distance like the handle of a bell. Then the bell itself appears, rounded, adorned with innumerable curly decorations. And as one wonders what one of the huge Japanese bronze bells can be doing here, sitting on the ground, our road still leads upwards until we command the whole plateau, and rise to the understanding that what we saw was merely the head and flame of the colossal standing Buddha for which Awkana is renowned.

Carved in full relief from the solid precipice stands the Buddha of Awkana on the hill-top, gazing out over all the flat lands that once were rich rice-field, and now, for the most part, are waving indistinguishable jungle. In the old days he looked straight across to the bund of Kálavewa in benediction. For the right hand is raised to bless the whole wide world, while the left is shifting the drapery of his shoulder. Energetic, therefore, and masterly is this colossus—far more than any other in the classical recumbent attitude. Here the stone has a life, a conviction; the Buddha lives in this standing figure, lives and still blesses the world with no indefinite gesture. High above his forehead rises the flame of the Holy Ghost, of the Perfect Glory; and his features, less marred by time than some, have a dominant calm that seems to be commanding all sufferers into the way of Peace. The Buddha of Awkana is majestic and authoritative, indeed, rather than winning and tender, as Maitreya of Gal Vihara; or radiantly benign, as Gautama of Maharaja Vihara; or

stimulating and suggestive, as the mutilated colossus of the Jétavánarâma at Polonnarua. Perfect, austere, magnificent, he sweeps the broad horizon with his gaze, and the lifted hand of benediction blesses man in a mass rather than men as individuals. Deep-cut in the slope before his cliff is a square hollow for the slab on which his feet are set. Before him runs a narrow lane, and on this side along the ledge of the hill-top, under the cliff, a broad platform, from which we view the figure. Here there are ruins of monastic buildings, dâgabas, and shrines; here, amid the fallen bricks and peeling plaster, rises the weeping mass of a stout old bo-tree, duly enclosed in its precinct; and here, too, gnarled and naked, toss the limbs of ancient temple-trees, carrying still their bunches of creamy sweetness for offering. From the plateau one has the Buddha's own view, out over the wide plain of the jungle towards the high bund of Kálavewa.

From Awkana Vihara one clambers down again, and so back, through the jungle and across the rice-fields, to the embankment and the carriage waiting on the road. And then, having drunk of a green cocoanut, fresh and cold from the tree, I set out on my homeward way to Kekirawa. And, after one more night at Kekirawa, I find myself at last, in the eighth and final day of my Odyssey, actually due in sacred Anuradhapura before nightfall. From Kekirawa our way lies sadly onward, for the road is dull and arduous and loose, the heroic horses utterly wearied of their journey. And the brilliant morning draws on in clouds, and the fine rain of yesterday falls in torrents to-day long before we have reached our mid-day halt at Tirappane. Tirappane is just a rest-house on the long road, whose backward premises look out on a wooded lake or slough, all silvery in the lances of the rain, with the big stars of Nymphæa standing boldly up from its

breast, and even in the shallows, where the mud is almost solid land.

And then, in an interlude of sunshine that comes when tiffin is over, we set out once more on the last stage of our journey. Slowly, slowly, slowly—the horses can hardly move beyond a walk—and each unmitigated level of the red road before us between the monochrome of jungle on either hand seems an endless ascent, until a corner is turned at last, and another appears to renew the climb. And so drearily, drowsily on through the grey afternoon; and ere long the heavens open again, and, through the silent sadness of the jungle stillness, comes hissing and ravening the rain. And still the level way continues, and still it seems to rise, and still it seems to grow longer and longer, more and more difficult and tedious. Through shallows of sand we stumble stupidly, and up and up the pitiless inclines, which seem a miracle and are a myth, in the vast hand-flat plain of the northern jungle.

At last there is a divergence of roads, which gives us hope of change. Where there are two roads there must at least be two places, and the very notion of places relieves the horror of this single lonely red thread of highway, wandering, it seems, purposeless and without end, through the interminable depths of the forest. And that other road leads on to Mihintalé, the Holy Hill. So we are close upon Anuradhapura—though, for that matter, we might well be fifty million miles from the nearest house or human being. And now, strange portents, sad little grunting motors come lumbering towards us out of the Sacred City, and vanish down the sandy vistas of the road. So still we advance slowly, like lead, seeing nothing, expecting everything, and still firmly, yet again, and incessantly, seeing nothing at all. Like a monotonous wall the dripping, dark jungle passes by on either hand; we have

long ceased from the semblance of motion: only the jungle, with its livid uniformity of vegetation, moves noiseless by like a thing in a dream. And now, surely, we must be in Anuradhapura. To our left suddenly appears the embankment of a lake. And then that hope passes, and there is once more nothing but trees and bush.

The widening highway, surely—the improving surface—must have *some* meaning? And still we crawl imperceptibly on, and on, and on, seeing no trace of life either present or past. And all this is Anuradhapura. We cross a modern bridge. The road is yet wider, hard and flat. Broad shade-trees, evidently planted by man, overhang it on either side. A few stray humans are plodding its wet expanse, slopping through the rain across its glittering surface. But why is there nothing else? Anuradhapura teems with gigantic sky-ypointing dâgabas. Why are these not visible above the trees? Why have they not been our conspicuous landmarks for the last twelve miles and more? We have not seen a sign of one—not a sign of anything above the blank merciless walls of the jungle. We are beginning drearily to disbelieve in Anuradhapura, dâgabas and all—beginning to think that either they have no solid existence, or else must be yet many miles away—when suddenly the forest breaks on our right. And straight overhead, high in the wet sky, looms above us the huge forested dome, the hideous restored tee and spire of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba. We are not approaching Anuradhapura, we are *in* Anuradhapura. Slowly, very slowly and imperceptibly, Abhayagiriya creeps by, and is left behind.

In utter silence now is our way accomplished. A heavy voicelessness seems to brood over the world. Silent, silent, as in sleep, we advance along that smooth wet road. The jungle thins, breaks, gives place to specimen

trees, to cleared spaces, to a tract of green grass and stalwart pillared trunks. Buildings come and pass us—a chapel, hovels, little dwelling-places, bungalows, shops. Intersecting roads appear in the distance beneath the broad emerald twilight of the trees; railings, a red-brick Christian church, an expanse like a big park, dotted with bungalows and fine houses of officials peppered leisurely and far across its leisurely extent. And then we find ourselves suddenly in the very heart of the Sacred City. Dead bones of ancient sanctities are seen; old collapsing posts and columns of stone. In front of the bazaar, as we approach it, stand ghostly up through the rain the squared beams of some bygone portico or examination hall. And on our left looms a forest of huge monoliths planted in the ground, leaning at every angle, squared and primitive. Hundreds upon hundreds they seem, stretching away in a perspective of perfect regularity. And this is all that remains of the great Brazen Palace, that miracle of architectural wealth and splendour. Beyond it, down a branch of the road, is something yet more august, for there is to be seen a forest of aged, filmy trees, enclosed in a walled parallelogram; and that enclosure, with its high triangular entrance of red brick, is the precinct of the Holy Tree itself. And so we move on to our destination, past all these wonders, so quiet and tragic now in the grey gloaming, past a square swimming-bath of wrought stone, most elaborate and beautiful, sunk in the grass, to the garden, the bungalow of our host, and our long journey's end. Sated with seeing, I alight, amid the sheets of rain, to make my welcome, and then—to see yet something else, the very crown and apex and culmination of my seeing. For there, far away across the park beyond, in a perspective of the long veranda, appears in the weeping dusk a ghostly grey shape, exquisite and graceful. And it is the holiest

ABHAYAGIRIYA DÂGABA.

of all holy things—the Thûparâma Dâgaba itself, very pivot and centre of devotion in Lanka. And now the evening bells are ringing to praise from the eastern altar of vast Ruanwéli, just beyond the compound, and the drums are beating through the quiet twilight from the precinct of the Tree:—indeed, at last I am in the Sacred of all Sacred Cities.

PART III

THE SACRED CITY

CHAPTER XIII

THÛPARÂMA DÂGABA

THE beginnings of this vast metropolis of monks date far back into the fourth century B.C., when in Northern India the adventurer Chandragupta destroyed the Greek kingdom of Magadha and established his own sovereignty. After his son's reign of twenty-eight years succeeded his grandson Çandasoka. Asoka was one among the hundred and one sons of Bindusara by his sixteen Queens. "By his piety and supernatural wisdom," says the Mahavansa, "he became all-powerful Emperor in India." As he killed a cool hundred of his brothers, it is not unkind to suggest that other qualities besides piety and supernatural wisdom assisted his elevation. The one remaining brother he made sub-King, and reigned very gloriously, with many an auspicious miracle from heaven. But the question of religion troubled him. His father Bindusara, being a Brahman, had maintained about sixty thousand Brahmans at the royal charges; and for three years Asoka did the same. "But one day, on looking from the upper window of his pavilion, he was struck with the vulgarity of their proceedings, and ordered his almoners to distribute largesse with more discrimination." Then he held a general council, and summoned all the ascetics of false

creeds, and dismissed them with an alms after discussion of their principles. And so, "another day, as he lay taking the air in his pavilion-tower, he saw the Buddhist novice Nigrodha crossing the public square before the palace, and was highly delighted with the young man's sanctified deportment."

Now the Sramana Nigrodha was the son of Sumana, the eldest of all King Bindusara's sons, who had duly been put to death by Asoka, his brother. At that time the Princess, his wife, who was also named Sumana, fled away to a village of pariahs; and there, amid wonderful portents, she was delivered of this son. And in the boy were found all the attributes of sainthood, and as he grew he became a monk, and at the very shaving of his head was perfected "arahat," a saint. And so one day, as he was going to see his Princess-mother, he crossed the palace square, and his murderous uncle, the Emperor, observing him from the casement, was exceedingly pleased with the remarkable propriety of his demeanour, and conceived "an affection for him that sprang from close association in a previous birth." So Asoka sent for the young man, and inquired of him the doctrine of the Buddhas. And the boy, being commanded to sit, saw no other place but the throne-imperial, and accordingly made as if to sit there in all simplicity. And the Emperor thought, "This day will this novice become master in my palace," and lent the boy his arm, and seated him at his side upon the throne. Then Nigrodha expounded the Way, and the Emperor was so convinced and entranced thereby that he entered immediately upon it, he and all his empire. So Asoka became a follower of the Buddhas, and made their faith the faith of his land, and diligently founded churches and monasteries and abbeys, with the result, among many others, that whereas for the crime

(as the Mahavansa tardily confesses it) of murdering all his hundred brothers he had previously been called Wicked Asoka (Çandasoka), he was henceforth known as Righteous Asoka (Dhammasoka).

And thus the religion of the Buddha, hitherto a lonely and a private path to release, through work and thought and simplicity, became at the Emperor's touch a State religion, pompous, rich and official, abounding in forms and magnificence and endowments, losing much meanwhile of its old lowliness and detachment from the world's lusts. Everywhere Asoka set up his inscriptions and his noble buildings of religion, and even the royal family took the way of the Church. The sub-King Tissa went a-hunting one day (for he was not yet a follower of the Path), and saw the elks at play in the forest. And he thought to himself, "Even elks in the forest have their play and diversion. Why should not the poor monks in their abbeys have diversions too?" So he went and put his question to the Emperor. And the Emperor, to show him his error, replied: "Prince, you shall now be King-regnant of all my land for full seven days; and at their end I shall put you to death." So Asoka renounced his empire, and Tissa reigned in his stead over all the realm. And at the end of the seven days Asoka resumed his sceptre and sent for Tissa. But Tissa was pale and worn and troubled of countenance. So Asoka asked him the reason why he was thus emaciated and wan. Tissa replied: "With the fear and foreknowledge of death, my lord." "Child," answered the Emperor, "for fear of death in seven days' time you have ceased to take all relaxation and diversion; how then shall the monks and holy men, who for ever are pondering death, have any heart for sport or play?" Thus the sub-King Tissa became a convert to the faith; and that he had not conformed

before shows that the autocrat Asoka was no bully, and would not force his State religion on any of his subjects. As for Tissa, he ultimately took the vows, and became a monk. And so did the Princess Sanghamitta, the Emperor's daughter, with her husband Aggibrahma, and their son Sumana. The Emperor himself, unable to take the vows, had fostered the wishes of Sanghamitta his daughter, and of Mahinda his son, knowing the merit that lies in causing son or daughter to tread the vowed path of religion. So on one day, amid a vast concourse of disciples and fellow-wayfarers along the Path, were these two very holy ones, Mahinda and Sanghamitta, admitted to the company of religious.

Meanwhile in Ceylon, far away in the south, generation after generation of Kings from Vijaya the Conqueror had established the dominion of the invading Cinhalese over the autochthonous Yakkhas or demons. But the great Indian Emperor cast the shadow of his greatness over all the Eastern world, and the Kings of Ceylon were anxious to be on the best possible terms with so renowned and redoubtable a neighbour. Accordingly, when Devanampiyatissa, the Darling of the Gods, succeeded his father Mutasiva on the throne of Lanka in the year 307 B.C., his first thought was to conciliate Asoka, with whom he had long been on terms of correspondence. Seen through monastic eyes, of course, Devanampiyatissa shines as a miracle of godliness, and we are told that the jewels all rose for him to the surface of the earth, and the pearls from the depths of the sea, such was the force and attraction of his piety. Be all this as it may, the King of Ceylon took his richest gems and sent them as a present to the Emperor of India. And Asoka, receiving the gifts with royal and splendid courtesy, sent back his advice to the Cinhalese monarch that, following the

Imperial example, he also should betake him to the true and happy Way of the Buddha.

Now one day the King, Darling of the Gods, went a-hunting in royal state for the amusement of his people. With forty thousand of his Court he set out from Anuradhapura, and came at last on foot to the base of Missa Mountain, which is now the Holy Mihintalé. And there he saw a marvellous elk, which stood browsing on the slope. Now that elk was really one of the mountain spirits, which had taken this form in order to lead the King to a discovery of certain holy things on the summit. Then the King said, "I will not shoot him standing"; and he twanged his bow. So the elk started, and made off up the mountain, followed by the King and all his Court. And thus at last they came to a place on the hill-top, ringed in by crests and pinnacles of rock. And there, in that shady hollow, the elk vanished; but in its stead, by an ancient mango-tree, stood a figure in yellow robes. The King was astounded. "Come hither, Tissa," said the strange monk, first of his kind to be seen in Lanka. And from his thus calling the King plain Tissa, with no courtesies nor honorifics, the King thought that this must be an uncultivated Yakkha, which shows, among other things, that the aborigines were now, as far as appearance goes, very much blended with the invading Cinhalese. But this was not the reason of the stranger's brevity of address; for that lonely monk, there in that lonely mountain-place, was none other than royal Mahinda, the Emperor's son, new-come from India to convert the King and kingdom of Lanka. So after Mahinda, by close questions, had satisfied himself that the King's mind was of good receptive and perceptive quality, the Imperial missionary unfolded the Gospel of the Most Perfect One, to the instant conviction of the King and all his

kingdom. And thus was accomplished the conversion of Laṅka.

Now, was this a genuine chance, or was it the most marvellous *coup-de-théâtre* ever planned and successfully achieved? There is every evidence that Mahinda was as strong a politician as the prophet Isaiah; was it he that had conceived beforehand this supremely dramatic first appearance in that shady hollow between the crests of Mihintalé, where now stands the Ambastála Dâgaba? Had the King received due notice, and was the whole hunting scene carefully planned, and the dialogue carried out according to a preconceived agreement? Be this as it may, Ceylon henceforth was unanimously and passionately Buddhist from that hour in the third century B.C. to our own day. The King returned to Anuradhapura that night; next morning the missionary, whether by miracle or ordinary means of progression, made his entrance to the royal city, and alighted on the spot where now stands the Thûparâma Dâgaba. With elaborate honours was he received, he and all his following; and now five hundred ladies of the palace, with the Princess Anula at their head, came forth to see the preacher and hear his word. And the soothsayers, seeing all this, announced that these new-comers would be lords and masters of Laṅka. Men and women came crowding to the words of Mahinda; rapidly did the Princess Anula, with her maidens, attain to the second stage of sanctification. So she, with her five hundred, begged of her father the King that she might be permitted to enter religion. "Vouchsafe," said the King to Mahinda, "to ordain this my daughter and her women into the ranks of the holy nuns." "I have no power to ordain women," answered Mahinda; "but if you will send to India, to the city of Pataliputta, there dwells my younger sister, the Lady Saṅghamitta, a nun

professed and profoundly learned. When she comes she will give ordination to your daughter and her ladies. Send letters, then, to my father the Emperor, begging him to dispatch her hither, and with her other nuns, and a branch of the Bo-Tree." So the King wrote letters to Asoka, and in a little time the Lady Sanghamitta landed in Lanka, together with the Blessed Tree and its many marvels. And the King dedicated his royal pleasure-ground of Mahamegha to the Brotherhood, and marked out his royal city for their domain.

In all this, and in all the other myriad dedications, foundations, and sacred buildings, the indefatigable hand of Mahinda is evident. He seems to have been a man of extraordinary force and influence. From that remotest age of Cinhalese history he stands out a more imposing figure than any later King, except Maha Séna and P'rakram' the Great. Devanampiyatissa merely plays the part of obedient acolyte to the missionary, and the sovereign vanishes from view behind the dazzling glory of the saint. As soon as the building of churches and abbeys had been accomplished, Mahinda bent his attention to a new point. "O ruler of men," said he to the King, "in all this land we have no object to which we can make offering." "Lord," answered the sovereign, "did you not tell me that our Supreme Buddha has passed into Nirvana?" "Wherever the sacred Relics are seen," replied Mahinda, "there also is the Perfect One, our Vanquisher, to be clearly beheld." "I understand," said the King. "I am to build a thûpa. Well, a thûpa I will build, and you shall see about the Relics." So, with miracle and myth, the story goes—how Mahinda sent oversea to Asoka for some corporeal relics of the Buddha Gautama, and after that Sumana the emissary, Mahinda's nephew, the son of Sanghamitta, was to go on into the presence of

Sakra, the Lord of Lords, the God of Gods, and beg Him to give up the Collar-bone Relic "of the deity worthily worshipped by three worlds." The Tooth-Relic, also in his possession, Sakra might keep ; let him, though, gladly give up the Collar-bone of the divine Teacher, "and not delay in matters concerning the salvation of Lanka." This passage is profoundly interesting, as showing the attitude of Buddhism towards the gods of other and older theistic faiths. They are never banished into outer darkness ; they are not denied or swept away or degraded to demon rank as Christianity degraded the gods of Hellas : they are fully accepted as partial revelations of the supreme Truth revealed by the Buddhas, and are made guardians to the Buddhist shrines. Powerful divinities we shall always find in charge of Thûparâma Dâgaba, for instance, and its sacred content.

But another thing : the whole thought of Mahinda shows that it was an advanced and modified Buddhism that Asoka had made his State-cult, and Mahinda introduced to Ceylon. Gone already is the high and lonely purity of the early ages. The worship of relics has become, as always, the splendour and the vice of the Church, soon to develop into an extravagance in Buddhist as in Christian Church, though never in the East into that abject craze which turned the bedrooms of the Spanish Philips into mere rag-and-bone shops, piled high with filthy and hideous wreckage of rotten corpses. And with the worship of relics inevitably comes materialism, ostentation, fraud, credulity, and the magnificent outward show that marks the decay of the inward spiritual grace. Indeed, glorious and beneficent as has been the beatifying work of Buddhism in Ceylon, as everywhere else where it has triumphed, despite greediness and degradation and schism among its monks (for the impurity of teachers has

no power to soil the purity of the thing taught), Ceylon, it must be frankly said, never knew the purely spiritual faith as it was preached in the Deer-forest or at Rajagaha from the mouth of the Most Perfect One. For one proof among many, Buddhism has never to this day been able to kill the caste system of Ceylon.

But after-ages owe a clear debt to this degraded development of a pure cult for the invisible into a gorgeous worship of the tangible ; for it is thanks to the cult of relics that Ceylon possesses such a store of ancient shrines. And the tremendous artistic impetus that the competition in shrine-building aroused was of inestimable service to national activities, to the consolidation and centralization of the Cinhalese Kingdom. And, beyond doubt, in providing visible objects of worship for the adoration of the simple devout, Mahinda was acting with typical priestly prudence, and doing the very best for the firm riveting of religious observance on the heart of the people. He was, in fact, giving them a centre and a focus for the devotional enthusiasm of the nation all down the ages, and in its kind his wisdom was abundantly justified. Whether from Asoka or from Sakra, Lord of Lords, Sumana duly returned with the right collar-bone of the Buddha Gautama.

Except as a symbol of the worshipper's worship of pure truth, such a cult of His bones would no doubt have been abhorrent to the infinite wisdom of Gautama ; but in the violation of all his dearest wishes after death, the founder of a faith always has to pay the penalty of his success in life. In His turn, what would Jesus say to the Christ-cult and all the Byzantine hair-splittings of Trinitarian theology ? In any case, it was inevitable that the veneration of Gautama's relics should ultimately develop into a rule, though never into that literal adoration and deifica-

tion of bone-splinters which soon became the curse of Christianity. The body, emptied of the Supreme indwelling Buddha, had vanished on the pyre at Kusinara; but fragments, of course, remained, and were duly collected, to be reverenced and ultimately worshipped in all countries of the Faith. And there were other relics, too, in the form of articles sanctified by the daily use of the Blessed One. Such were, of course, the Alms-bowl, which played so large a part in Cinhalese history; the Eating-dish which accompanied the Collar-bone; and the portion of the Belt, for which Jétavánarâma still aspires tremendously to heaven.

With miracles and portents of the most terrific, says legend, did Sumana bring back the relics from the Court of Sakra, and the King, in full royal state, enshrined them in his new dâgaba. Both pagoda and dâgaba are developments from the traditional form of the Sacred Tomb, and possibly relics from some still older religious form of building. From a broad platform, round or square, rises the bell-shaped erection, surmounted by a tapering spire, the spire being emphasized in the pagoda, the dome in the dâgaba. It was thus that Thûparâma rose at Anuradhapura—small, lovely precursor of gigantic Ruanwéli and Abhayagiriya in the third century B.C. And when the building was completed, the King went forth with all his people to deposit the Collar-bone. And, again, innumerable portents attested the authenticity of the Relic. It performed the most startling evolutions—rose in the air, glowed, dispensed fire and water at once in a biform miracle, filled all the land with its light and dew; ultimately it descended to alight on the King's head, and Darling of the Gods devoutly laid it in the shrine, while a terrific earthquake raged around, and caused the hair of the bystanding multitudes to stand on end, though with-

out inflicting any damage on the new-built dâgaba. And then, having completed the shrine, King Darling of the Gods went on to found a rich abbey for its maintenance, dâgaba and vihara being known for the future as Thûparâma. "And thus," says the Mahavansa, "the Saviour of the world, even after He had achieved His Mahaparinibban, performed, by means of a corporeal Relic, infinite acts to the utmost perfection for the spiritual comfort and the earthly prosperity of mankind. What, then, must He, the Vanquisher, have accomplished while yet He lived!"

The best hour now to see the Thûparâma is at grey twilight. From the Residency the way lies clear across the broad expanse of the park, passing first along the western moat of Ruanwéli. The park is perfectly English, a broad slice transplanted from Richmond—smooth, pleasant glades of grass, shaded here and there with vast secular trees. All this has been cleared of jungle in the last two generations, and in two generations more, if left to itself, would be trackless jungle again. But now it is open and clear. The officials use it as a golf-course. You may wander far and far across its acres, and for ever find fresh dells and delightful places of shade and sun and pool. Away to the left lies high, under a rich avenue of verdure, the embankment of Basawakk'lam Lake, and there, from a tall mound once tenanted by some holy building, of which nothing remains but some squared pillars with carved capitals, you may look over the cleared expanse and get some idea of the enormous grandeur that once was Ruanwéli Dâgaba.

And between Ruanwéli and Thûparâma the whole grassy plain is studded thick with holy ruins. Two splendid square foundations there are, most notably, old as Devanampiyatissa, upheld by tremendous square pillars of wrought stone, whose heavy capitals are rich with

carving. Hither and thither they totter, these columns, and their sculptured heads lie strewn on the grass-grown pavement of the shrine. Beyond these are humped foundations and ruined walls of many an abbey building, and forests of rough stone pillars that once were coated with moulding and plaster and colour. Now they stand bare and crude, dimly hinting at the picture that they must once have presented, when they were clothed in ornament from top to bottom, disguising their nakedness, and carried a roof that was rich in carving and gold. Stripped and sad they stand in the sad dusk, retreating, as if ashamed, into the black shadow of the trees that grow near. The air after a rainy day is grey and very tranquil; clear through the pensive stillness comes the sound of the bells at Ruanwéli; and there, before us in the gloaming, stands ghostly the dome and spire of Thûparâma, high above the round wall of its precinct.

And Thûparâma has a rare wistful majesty of loveliness, abandoned there in the twilight. It is the smallest of the great dâgabas, but incomparably the most beautiful in line and proportion, even after its innumerable restorations. Fifty feet is perhaps the extreme measure of its height; but it is so designed that not an inch is lost. Suave, calm, and decisive are its outlines; the balance of the whole is perfect. A big plateau was built for its reception, and girt with a rounded wall, once plastered and painted. Within, on the platform, rises the dâgaba, white against the heavy greens of the park beyond. It was thus that Devanampiyatissa set it up in the third century B.C.; and thus it still is to-day—rifled perhaps, desolate certainly, and yet serene, triumphant, dominant. In the first century of our era King Vasabha adorned the shrine with the exquisite pillars that still waver and droop round the dâgaba, like palm-trees in grace, slender and stiff. Of these there are

four rows in ranks of different heights, the tallest surrounding the cupola itself. Their lower half is square; then they are wrought octagonal, and their capitals, heavy and deeply carved, are made in separate blocks of stone. At one time, of course, they carried a painted roof, stately and golden, that sheltered the whole dâgaba, probably, and made a huge covered gallery of the entire platform. But now the roof has been gone for many centuries, the pillars are broken and shaken; this way and that they lean, and often their capitals lie jostling on the flags of the platform, and the grass that outlines all its joints grows up around them. One ample flight of steps leads up to the platform, its balustrades enriched with carved monsters. At its base there stands a monolithic stone cistern, a rectangle with waved edges adorned with simple lines of carving; and beyond, in a line with the steps, lies across the grass the long line of pillared ruins that mark the porches, porticoes, and regal propylaia by which in the old days you came in state up to the gateway and the precinct of Thûparâma.

Very richly endowed was once the Thûparâma Dâgaba, first and always most holy of the many rich and holy places in Anuradhapura. The Mahavansa chronicles endowment after endowment, gift after gift, of village and field. King Lajji Tissa even enclosed the whole building in stone in the second century B.C., having made his peace with the church which he had hated for opposing his succession. But the foundation had its vicissitudes. Maha Séna, the heretic, was persuaded to its destruction; and the heresiarch Sanghamitta—on no account ever to be confounded with that great saint the Princess-Abbess from India, who had the same name—was murdered in the nick of time while he was actually planning the demolition of the dâgaba. Nor, of course, did invaders spare the

rich shrine. But it appears wealthy and splendid as ever in the reign of Aggabodhi the Second, when a portion of the spire fell, and the King was advertised of the workmen's dilatory methods of restoration by the guardian gods of the shrine, who harassed his slumbers with orders to hurry on the repairs, that the Relic might soon go back to its own place, and no longer be relegated to a mere side-altar in the church of the Tooth, where it had been stored pending the reparation of the Thûparâma. Meanwhile, however, bad times were darkening over Lanka, and about 640 A.C. King Dathopatissa, distracted by incessant war, found himself, in his poverty, reduced to plundering the shrines of their golden coverings and treasures. After him came his sub-King, Kasyapa the Second, who ultimately succeeded to the throne, and actually had the effrontery to demolish the Thûparâma and spoil it of all its ancient offerings. Even Dathopatissa was shocked by this, and immediately restored the dâgaba. But Kasyapa is naturally *mal-vu* by the chronicle for his action, especially as "he destroyed many of the other dâgabas, too, all to support his army. So ill-advised was he that they say not even the King, Dathopatissa, had power to stop him from these wicked deeds. Oh, how difficult it is to restrain evil-minded men!" After this the history of the dâgaba is that of incessant despoilment and restoration, each time, no doubt, the restoration growing poorer and more perfunctory with the increasing misery of the land, until at last, after the final flash of brilliancy under P'rakram' Bahu the Great, in which the sacred buildings of the old capital were made whole again, the Northern Kingdom faded southward from Polonnarua in ever-deepening despair, and the silence of utter neglect and abandonment came down over the ancient holy city in the plain. Yet still, through all the miseries of the later

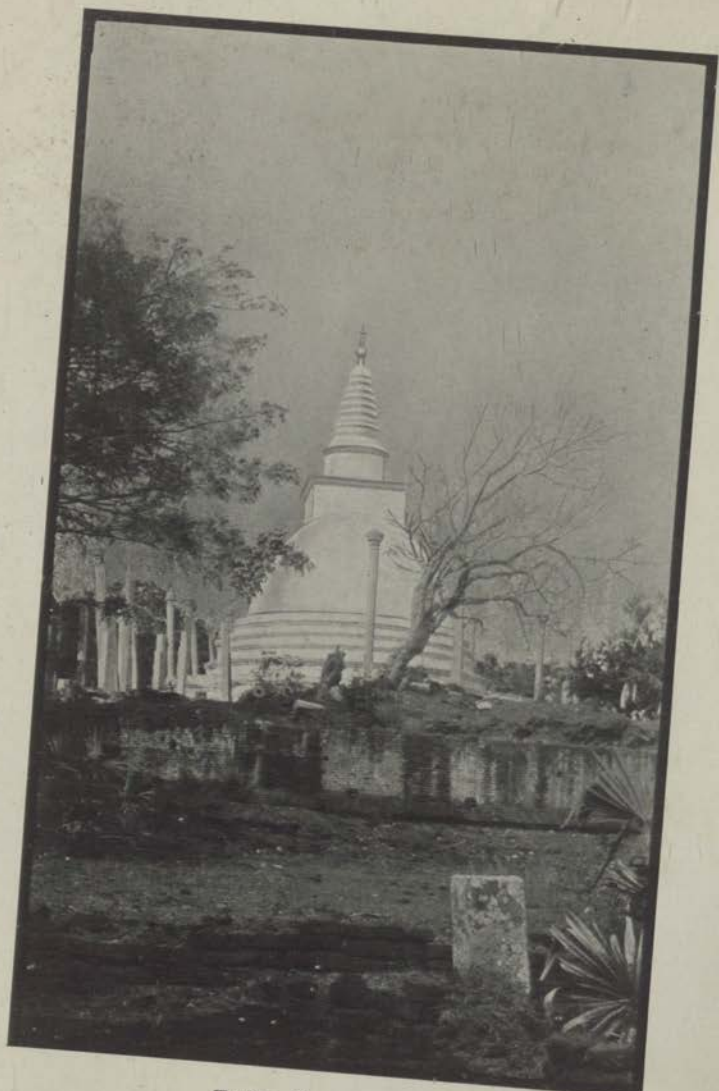
centuries, a few faithful tended always the ravished shrines of Anuradhapura, and when Knox, the English captive, fled thither in the reign of Charles the Second, he found an active town, though he shows no notion of what the capital was in the days of its splendour; but the holiest of all thûpas remained forgotten and lost in the dark jungle, until a monk, quite in these latter days, undertook its clearance and restoration.

What, then, is there left of Devanampiyatissa's dâgaba? In all probability the design and the beauty and the dainty simplicity of the present dome, and of all earlier restorations, exactly imitates that of the original design. The Cinhalese, as restorers, are very faithful to their models; and the earthen core of the building, they say, has remained untroubled through the centuries; so that it is just barely possible that down at the dâgaba's heart there yet lies buried the precious bodily relic of the Most Perfect One. The chance, however, is very frail; the Mahavansa tells us that the Holy Thing was shrined in a hollow at the top of the dâgaba, and it is hardly probable that thence it can ever have been transferred to the foundations. Nor would the fury of treasure-hunters have respected the inmost core, even, of the building, had there been any notion of hidden treasures yet remaining. And it is inconceivable that so sacred a relic should have been buried without gold cases and jewelled adornments. The relic is more likely to have been removed secretly in the dark days and transferred elsewhere; and where it now is, or whether it now exists at all, there is no one who can tell. Yet, as is right and fitting, the ravaged shrine has lost nothing of its sanctity, and is revered to-day as devoutly as ever in its wealthiest splendour. For whether the Relic lie here or no, yet this spot, through the ages, is a centre for adoration and glorification of the Most Perfect One, and that adoration must

not centre round the tangible little fragment of His bone, but round the sublime and lovely thought of Him, which can never pass away, no matter what the vicissitudes of His fragments and His cathedrals.

In the blue twilight, if one approaches the lonely white dome on its pedestal, the feeling of its holiness is almost overwhelming. So calm, so benign, so full of a high and confident repose is this august place, at rest now from all the many changes and chances of its life. Man has done his best and his worst for Thûparâma; henceforth the building stands quiet, embodiment of peace after storm, of peace through all the storms of the world. As the gloaming deepens towards night, there flickers from its pavement a rare taper or two, shedding golden beams far through the grey dusk across the park. For there, above the steps, where once was an encircling arcade of gold and carving, totters now one miserable little wooden altar, like a poor booth at a fair, roofed over cheaply and uncertainly. And yet on this frail stall hearts can be offered no less sincerely than on slabs of solid gold and rubies; and the faithful still come here across the silent park, through the gathering darkness, to make their homage, and think their holy thoughts before that Incarnate Holy Thought which ceased so many centuries ago, yet endures immortal for ever beyond the worlds and the universes. Where all, now, is ruin, reverence and worship alone are not ruined. And these are the very souls of a sacred building. Ruin, then, has no power to touch the Thûparâma, nor Time to corrode it, while one soul remains to offer praise and happiness on its altars. For the heart of the worshipper is far more truly the wall, adornment, essence of the Church than any utmost prodigality of display in marble, porphyry, and gilding.

"Impermanence, evanescence, misery of evanescence,"



THÛPARÂMA DÂGABA.

is indeed the sermon that Buddhism preaches on the plain text of life. And yet, insistent as is that superficial truth as regards our superficial earthly life, it must never be forgotten that this is only part of the whole truth that is voiced by that wail—only the lesser part—and that only for the fuller conviction of the unreflecting who cling to sense and desire and bodily lusts. For the whole truth is this: that behind all impermanence, evanescence, misery of evanescence, there lies a real permanence, and a real solid happiness of permanence. The doctrine of misery is too often over-laboured by Buddhist preachers, simply for the enforcing of its truth on the multitude—the real truth, in its completeness, containing two sides, of which misery and impermanence make only the under, darker side. The other side is the eternal happiness, the eternal truth. For while joy and sorrow in sensuous activities are unrewarding, unreal, a diet of dust and ashes, the one thing really existing in this shadow-world is that perfect joy which belongs to the Great Reality. And that joy, that ecstasy, can never change, or falter, or fade. In every manifestation, even, of this shadow-world, can the eternal element be discerned. The flower laid on the altar of the Buddha as lovely symbol of impermanence in loveliness yet has its permanence too if we contemplate it from the point of view of happiness. For its loveliness springs from its truth to the Universal Law, and that truth can never change; so the beauty—in a sense, even, the outward beauty—can never change. It remains always in the world, as a memory of truth made visible in beauty. And so it is from highest to lowest; and this delicate phantom dome, dim blue now in the darkening night, with the golden twinkle of its candles on their altar, is no less permanent in change than the flower. Brick and stone and plaster, gold and jewel and colour, pass entirely away and melt and

vanish ; but that alone in which Thûparâma ever had its real beauty was the spirit of love and gratitude in which it was built. Earthly riches were only beautiful as the sign of this ; and this can never pass away—is as potent to-day as ever it was in the days of Kings and abbots and gorgeous ceremonial, though now the Kings and abbots are dust, the ceremonial forgotten, the very building stripped and bare and desolate. Only their love and aspiration remain, and that was the sole reality of them, their one unchanging self.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRINCESS-ABBESS AND THE HOLY TREE

ALL round the Thûparâma Dâgaba the park is thick-set with ruins of the Thûparâma Vihara. Even the Mahavansa uses the words "vihara" and "pirivena" almost interchangeably, so that there is no rigid decision possible as to what part of the monastic building the pirivena may be, though it appears likely that in the Mahavansa the part may have been used for the whole, and that "pirivena" may mean the actual dwellings and cloister of the monks, while the bigger word "vihara" embraces the whole foundation, and is used for the entire abbey. Indistinguishable for the most part now are the grass-grown relics of Thûparâma Vihara. In one place, at the back of the dâgaba, the crowded pillars of some large building, whose steps are guarded by serpent-kings of delicate design, shrink backwards into the shadow of a vast ilex. This, probably, made some prominent part in the abbey buildings. The serpent-kings of Buddhist legend clearly survive from a very ancient serpent cult which has been absorbed into the faith of the Buddhas. The stairway of every holy building is guarded on right and left by a big oval stone, in shape like one of our rounded grave-stones, on which is carved in almost full relief the graceful curving figure of a young man clasping a cornucopia, and with the cobra heads rising behind his own as a canopy. Thus are the monarchs of the older faiths allotted a distinguished rôle in the newer.

In front of Thûparâma, lying alongside the portico, is the original Daladá Mâligawa, the first temple of the Tooth-Relic. This seems to have been of strange design —not a dâgaba in any form, but simply a big, rectangular building like a church, whose pillars are capitalled with a strange heavy design of triform loops, which puzzled many of the learned until it was suggested that they derived from the Trisul sacred to Hinduism and the Siva cult. And this is made more likely when we remember that the Mahavansa makes Sakra the actual guardian of the Relic before it arrived in Lanka. Whether from the hands of Sakra, or from some less distinguished provenance, the Tooth arrived in Ceylon many centuries after the Collar-bone, being brought over by a Kalinga Princess, as I have said, in the reign of Siriméghavanna, who succeeded his father Maha Séna, the heretic, in A.C. 304. But in those days, perhaps, zeal was on the decline, and men too busy to indulge in the splendid marvels that accompanied the Collar-bone to the Court of Devanampiyatissa; for the Tooth, though received with much honour and glory, appears unattended with any of the éclat that accompanied the founding of Thûparâma. Its appointed church was an old building of Devanampiyatissa's, so that we must accept the present ruin either as a restoration or as the last trace of a foundation contemporary with the original Thûparâma Dâgaba. It was thence that the Relic embarked on its long wanderings as the kingdom sank—to Polonnarua, Kotmalle, Kurunegala, Kotte, Yâpahu, Gampola, Sitavaka, and Kandy. It was in this shrine, too, that the Collar-bone must have been deposited, pending the restoration of Thûparâma under Aggabodhi the Second, when the guardian-gods were so vexed with the labourers' delays that they disturbed the slumbers of the King to have the job quickly accomplished.

To the north of Thûparâma, close under the dâgaba, sweeps the modern carriage-road by which one circles the park. One branch of it wanders down into the jungle towards "Lankarama," Jétavánarâma, and the thousand lost ruins in the forest; the main branch curves under the northern end of Thûparâma, and returns along the edge of the park, passing the hospital, the Rest-house, the Mahapali Alms-hall, the eastern face of Ruanwéli, and so back to the bazaar and the precinct of the Holy Tree. Immediately across the road from Thûparâma there lies a small rounded foundation of worn red brick, dim and faded with the ages, only the groundwork of the design being visible. It seems like the wreck of some prehistoric little lime-kiln, built of brick. Tread lightly, though, at this corner, and, carriages, go reverently, for this is a holy place, and here lie shrined the ashes of the holy Lady Sanghamitta, Princess Imperial of India, shaven-head nun and missioner of Lanka.

Almost as prominent in Cinhalese history as Mahinda her brother, Sanghamitta stands out in those remote ages a notable and vivid figure. She took the vows at the age of eighteen, a wife who had already born a son; her learning was profound, and her brother's first action on the success of his mission in Ceylon was to send oversea for his sister. Her father, Asoka, would not stand in the way of her wish, which unhesitatingly decided to obey the call. "My mother," he said, addressing his daughter with the respect due to the wise nun (even as Baltasar Carlos, "I the Prince," addressed the lowly Maria of Agreda)—"my mother, without you, without my children and grandchildren, what shall I do to heal my affliction?" But she answered: "Great King, the call of my brother must not be refused; there are many there to be ordained, and so it is proper that I should go."

But Sanghamitta was not the only precious thing for which Mahinda had urgently sent. She was to bring with her a rooted cutting of the Bo-Tree from Buddha Gaya, that most sacred of all places known to man. Miracles wearisome, terrific, uncounted, accompanied Asoka's dealings with the Tree. Its branch became severed automatically, hovered high in the air, descended upon the golden vase prepared to hold it, and put forth roots in such abundance that they overflowed. Twice did the Emperor "invest the branch with his empire," and on the seventeenth day after its severance it put forth its new leaves. In the utmost splendour, natural and supernatural, was the new Tree escorted to the coast, and there it was carried in state to the vessel by officials of the highest rank, the Emperor himself being its bearer until the water reached his very neck. So Righteous Asoka returned to the shore, and there stood with hands uplifted as the ship set sail, after which, with tears and sobs, he returned to his capital, Pupphapura, the City of Flowers. Meanwhile across a sea of miracles the Bo-Tree went, in charge of the nun Sanghamitta. Innumerable gods made offerings, and portents abounded. "The serpents resorted to their usual magic arts to get possession of the treasure, but Sanghamitta, who had attained the six-fold Power, assumed the shape of a 'Supanna' (whatever that may have been), and frightened them away." Meanwhile King Devanampiyatissa, having warning of the Tree's advent, had built a stately hall for it on the beach, and, when the vessel was in sight, he and the princely castes all ran out into the water up to their necks to receive the ineffable burden. Having lodged it in the hall, he made his kingdom over to it (here was a chance for later Buddhist Popes, had Cinhalese prelates ever aimed at temporal power !), and all

did it honour for many days, after which it set out on a miraculous procession, and arrived at the Northern Gate of Anuradhapura on the fourteenth day.

There, in the Mahamegha garden, dedicated to the Great Abbey, the Maha Vihara, the Tree was deposited, the King himself lending a hand. But the Bo-Tree rose straight up into the air like a towering pheasant, and there poised, glowing with the Six-fold Ray. All day the glory continued, and ten thousand converts, absorbed in contemplation, attained sanctity and took the Yellow Robe. At sunset the Tree came down and planted itself, its roots brimming over and so vehemently gripping the earth that it forced the vase in which it stood clean down into the ground and out of sight. After this all Lanka made offering, and then a terrific storm of rain broke round the Tree. Dense clouds descended, and for seven days enveloped it in their snowy womb. "And this," says the Mahavansa, "occasioned renewed delight in the populace," though one can imagine more exhilarating miracles. Ultimately, however, all the clouds dispersed, and the Tree once more shone out resplendent with its rainbow of Six Rays before the beatified eyes of Devanampiyatissa, Mahinda, Sanghamitta, and all the people. Immediately after that a ripe fruit fell, which, being reverently sown, germinated at once in eight flourishing young plants. Thus did the Bo-Tree begin its marvellous career of reproduction, which in a few years gave every monastery and shrine in Lanka a grandchild of the Sacred Tree at Buddha Gaya.

Even animals in those blessed times had their pieties. The King's elephant one day, browsing in the shady dell which he had chosen for his own, refused to feed; and Mahinda, when the King asked the reason of this, was able to discern that the sagacious beast required a

dâgaba to be built in that place. "The sovereign, who always granted the desires of his subjects, lost no time in building a thûpa there," and stored it with a relic—no doubt with the most beneficial results on the elephant's appetite. As for the lady Sanghamitta, she was lodged in the palace of twelve apartments, formerly tenanted by Princess Anula before she took the vows. There also were deposited the relics of the ship that had brought the Tree, and all through subsequent ages the nuns of that foundation retained their residence. But Sanghamitta found the place too noisy, insufficiently retired from the world. "She wished to lead a life of true devotional seclusion, for the better advancement of religion and the spiritual comfort of the nuns. Actuated, then, by these pious motives, this lady, sanctified in mind, and exalted by her knowledge of the higher life, repaired to the delightful and charmingly secluded shrine in the elephant's favourite glade, and there enjoyed her noonday rest."

Thus King Devanampiyatissa, when he went to visit the abbess, discovered that she had removed. So he followed her, and, discerning her tastes, built for her sisterhood a pleasant convent in the place she had chosen, and there she dwelt with her nuns. And meanwhile grievous things were happening in India. The Bo-Tree had come from Asoka in the eighteenth year of that monarch's reign. Twelve years later died his Empress, the noble and excellent lady Asandhimitta, who had identified herself with the Faith; and in the fourth year from that the Emperor, "blinded with carnal passions, elevated the Princess Tissarakkha to the vacant throne, and this young frivolous creature, who thought of nothing but her own personal charms," grew bitterly jealous of her husband's veneration for the Sacred Tree of Buddha Gaya. In the third year of her reign her discontent grew to a

head, and she thought, "This Emperor neglects me, and devotes himself exclusively to the Bo-Tree." So in her rage she tried to destroy that great old Tree with the poisoned fang of a toad. The Mahavansâ is silent as to her success or failure—silent as to the after-date of Tree or Empress—but merely records, as an event important over all the East, that four years later "the highly-gifted monarch, the Emperor Asoka, fulfilled the common lot of mortality."

All this time King Devanampiyatissa in Ceylon, prompted by the Prince-monk Mahinda and the Princess-nun Sanghamitta, was diligently pursuing pious courses, and endowing vihara after vihara, dâgaba after dâgaba; and godliness abounded greatly in the land throughout this age of saints. But its chief heroes were growing old and beginning to pass from the scene. The first to go was King Darling of the Gods, who died in 267 B.C., after a reign of forty years, to be succeeded by his brother Uttiya. This sovereign governed righteously, but his reign is principally notable for the departure of the two high sanctities, Mahinda and Sanghamitta. Mahinda died in 259, and obtained his final release on Mihintalé, his holy hill, whence his spirit merged in Nirvana. For him the King made lamentation loud and deep for all his vanished virtues. Then the corpse was cremated in front of the Maha Vihara in Anuradhapura, and the sacred ashes being divided and apportioned, half of them were buried on Mihintalé, at the scene of the saint's appearance, where still stands the Ambastâla Dâgaba, which was built for their shrine. The rest were divided among all the monasteries of Lanka for their better edification. So that the ruin close to Thûparâma, which is traditionally called Mahinda's Tomb, cannot really contain his ashes—or, at least, not more than a minute fraction of them.

Thus the Prince-apostle died and was honoured in death. His sister, the Princess-abbess, followed him a twelve-month later into the Perfect Peace, in the seventy-seventh year of her age, and the fifty-ninth of her vows. For seven days, with the utmost pomp and holiness, were kept the funeral ceremonies of the Lady Sanghamitta, and on the seventh day the corpse was carried to the southward of Thûparâma Dâgaba, and there the King consumed it with fire, and erected a dome over the blest place. Thus closes the generation of the saints, and the Mahavansa hurries on to tell us how all the holy monks, companions and disciples of Mahinda, and all the holy nuns, companions and disciples of Sanghamitta, together with all the myriads of converted and sanctified, submitted to the lot of mortality in due course of nature.

Throughout the history of Lanka the precinct of the Holy Tree is the very nucleus of the nation's veneration and spiritual life: King after King enriched it with statues, gold, jewels, pillars, adornments of every kind. At the end of the sixth century it was covered in with sheets of lead; in the tenth the old soil was made good, and the Tree banked up. Then it was under the care of the nuns. It was the Holy of all Holies in that colossal abbey the Maha Vihara of Devanampiyatissa—the greatest religious foundation that the world has ever seen; greater than the Potalá or the Vatican; whose main edifice was the Great Brazen Palace of Duttha Gamini, with its nine stories and its nine hundred rooms, but whose territory also included Mahapali Alms-hall and the whole gigantic splendour of Ruanwéli Dâgaba, with its abbeys and cloisters. And never has its holiness entirely failed. In the darkest days of the Northern Kingdom, through invasion and desertion, the monks and abbots kept up the due dignity of the Tree; during the long centuries through which

Anuradhapura lay lost in jungle, it was round the Holy Tree that centred the last flickering remnants of the city's vitality; and in the revival of to-day the Tree is still the foremost object of love, visited by thousands innumerable each year from Burma, Siam, China, Japan, and Thibet. The high festival is in summer, when the Sacred City is crowded with eager multitudes as in the far-off days of Devanampiyatissa and Sanghamitta the nun. It is characteristic of Buddhism and its effects that that huge mob is the gentlest and best-ordered in the world, so that even the officials, characteristically cold though not unkindly towards all popular demonstrations of religious zeal, are nevertheless glad to admit that no supervision is necessary beyond the ordinary—not a single extra policeman to safeguard the peace. A different scene indeed from the trebly-guarded, yet ever ebullient hatred that rages at Easter through the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. By their fruits, indeed, shall ye know them, and Christianity and Buddhism have each reaped their inevitable reward—the one for becoming a religion of theology, the other for remaining a religion of kindly thought and action, in which animosities have neither place nor justification.

Stripped, though, and shorn is the Bo-Tree now of all its bygone splendours. Beneath a tall, triangular gateway of red brick you pass up over the ancient steps into the precinct, guarded on all four sides by its high wall. But the wall is feathery with grass and weed; creepers cover it in places, and small grey squirrels flicker like lizards in and out of its crannies, while wise little pink-faced monkeys peer grievously down at you from the forks of the innumerable great ancient Bo-Trees, seedlings of the Holy Tree, that have sprouted all round from the crannies of the wall. Magnificent aged specimens are these now,

in the course of years, and make the whole enclosure a forest of shade. Through their fine, sparse foliage the sunlight dapples the bare earth, and quivers and dances as the breeze goes dancing through their branches. The warm twilight of the place is filled with a very pleasant calm. All over the precinct are scattered forests of square stone pillars that originally carried roofs, porches, abbey buildings. Here and there among them sit or lie prone pathetic black statues of the Most Perfect One, marred and broken, stripped of their gold and jewels, left tumbled amid the wreckage, or cradled in the roots of some Bo-Tree, with the sunlight making streaks and splashes of gold amid the greenery across the dark smiling face that once, gilded and coloured, gazed out through the sacred obscurity of some close shrine.

In the centre of the enclosure rises high the square embankment of the Holy Tree itself. This, by the earthing up of many ages, has now become a walled mass of masonry as solid as a house. You approach it usually, though there are other stairways, by a steep flight of steps, in carved stone, that rises on the left, flanked by serpent-king guard-stones, with every step upborne by two or three little fat grinning dwarfs. At right angles to this, against the very wall of the temenos, modern zeal is now building a big church, square and ugly, to enshrine a colossal Buddha, who sits throned against the side of the Bo-Tree's enclosure. Devotion here, as ever, is combining with tastelessness to disfigure the holy place. Of the little turrets in the platform far above us, one is roofed with Humphrey's corrugated iron, and a suburban lamp-post stands at the base of the steps.

So, having mounted the steep rise to the foot of the stairway, one climbs up into the precinct itself. Passing through the gate, one finds oneself in a walled square,

with pent-house roofing on all sides. The flagged path runs all round, and the centre of the space is filled with the square embankment, like a vast stone box, within which is planted the Holy Tree. A green, calm twilight holds the place, and the scent of offered flowers hangs wavering in the air, for in the middle of each side there is a shrine and an altar of offering for the Holy Thing. A spiked railing of modern European iron guarantees the Tree from approach, and this is hung with continuous sheets of beaten brass, stamped with scenes from Scripture. Clean and swept and tended is the enclosure, and in the guarded space of earth in the midst the Tree still lifts its boughs abroad, and scatters its holy leaves—heart-shaped, immensely long-tailed—over the floor of the pathway, whence the pious eagerly collect them for relics. Only the monks may scramble up over the altar, and so climb to the railing, and thence into the Tree's plot; we must stand below in the alley, and look upwards at the sacred trunk flickering sparse branches against the sunlight and the blue above.

The Holy Tree shares its precinct with a younger offspring, and the trunk of the sanctity is but very small and frail—paradoxically so, considering that this is the oldest plant in the world; for, though a controversy rages over the authenticity of the Holy Tree of Anuradhapura, it is hard to resist the conviction that the thing is genuine. Against such a view may be set two facts, of course—the short life of such succulent growths as *Ficus religiosa*, the smallness of the trunk as we now see it—not a quarter the size of the old trees in the courtyard—and the notorious ingenuity of religious bodies in avoiding anything that looks like a confession of weakness in the death or disappearance of a relic (we have seen this at Kandy, in the Daladá Mâligawa). And yet, on the other

hand, however much the abbots and monks might have wished to replace a dead Bo-Tree by a younger offset, they must obviously have found the task impossible. A huge ancient tree is not a thing that dies in an hour, and can be replaced overnight without anybody's noticing the substitution of a sapling; nor could one move a full-grown specimen successfully—certainly not without arousing comment. And Anuradhapura has never been so entirely deserted that the fraud could have been successfully accomplished. And the fact that *Ficus religiosa* is not, as a rule, long-lived, vanishes in consideration of the extraordinary care bestowed on this particular specimen; it has been earthed up again and again, until there has grown up round it a box of soil the size and height of a big house; and the enclosure which once, of course, stood on the level ground of the precinct has been so banked up that now it stands about 50 feet above it. And this, of course, explains the smallness of the Bo-Tree trunk as we see it, and is the strongest proof of the Relic's authenticity. For we do not see the Bo-Tree trunk at all; we only see the last topmost branch of the tree; the original trunk lies far down in the earth at the heart of the enclosure, having been buried deeper and deeper as they earthed up each successive moribund limb to prolong the life of the remainder, until now there only protrudes the last branch of the tree-top which alone has life still in it. Nor will this long continue unless banked up once more; and so the Tree will grow smaller and smaller as it gets older.

Everyone, of course, understands the reason of this Tree's superlative holiness. For this, the oldest known of all trees, planted three hundred years B.C., is an unquestioned cutting or offset from that still more Holy Tree of Buddha Gaya. It was at Uruvilva, in the

kingdom of Magadha, in Northern India, that, having tried asceticism and philosophy and all other paths in vain, Prince Siddharttha Sakhyamuni, having refreshed himself at last with food (and thereby shocked away all his disciples), sat down beneath the shade of a tree. And there the Prince went through his final temptation, and resisted the onslaughts of the Evil One and his three wicked daughters, the Desires. But Sakhyamuni "watched them as one watches children at their harmless games. So Mara was seized with despair, and the flames of hell were turned to pleasant breezes, and the angry thunderbolts became blossoms of the lotus." Then Mara fled away, and the Prince plunged deep once more in meditation.

And there, in that night, befell the Great Miracle. For, in an hour and a moment, the unfaltering purpose of the æons was fulfilled; all weakness passed away from the perfected soul for ever; passed away was Siddharttha Sakhyamuni; only remained the Wholly Awakened One, the Supreme Buddha, master of reality, vanquisher of time and space, of life and death. Earth rocked in that hour, and heaven rang with music as the Buddha Gautama grew to the full perfection of His stature. And there, in the absolute bliss that knows no thought of change or sorrow, Our Lord remained for seven days and seven nights, glorious within and without in His contemplation of the Four Noble Truths which cover every field of happiness and experience. And then befell the second miracle, for He put away His own reward in compassion for the world, and came forth from under the tree, and deigned for five-and-forty years, He, the Utterly Perfect One, to linger on earth, diligently expounding the Way of rejoicing to all men. Small wonder, then, that His faithful adored that blessed tree, and built a vast temple around it, and called the place Buddha Gaya. So through many

centuries the Bo-Tree was revered, and the date of its destruction and death is not clearly known. There, deep down by the foundations of the desecrated cathedral at Buddha Gaya, were found but the other day its spreading roots. Even now the faithful may walk humbly upon the very spot whence has radiated through so many ages such incalculable happiness for such incalculable millions. And from this tree the Bo-Tree of Anuradhapura is an authentic offset, then, severed in the days of its parent's vigour, and now endowed with more sanctity than its mere own, seeing that it receives the worship due, in the death of the original Tree, to the last living memory on earth of the supreme holiness that was the Buddha Gautama.

It is fortunate, indeed, that Buddhism never, despite the divagations of its Church, developed, like Christianity, along lines of theology, dogma, and hair-splitting terminological quarrels. About observance and ritual, and high beds and soft beds, and fringed bed-vallances, and other such vitally important matters of daily rule, the early monks had their quarrels, it is true; and the history of Ceylon, we have seen, contains many accounts of schisms and heresies and condemnation of uncanonical books. These, though, are inseparable from the development of any Church or body of ecclesiastics. But throughout their worst schisms the Buddhists never lost sight of the cardinal fact that the Buddha's revelation is a way of happiness in life and hope in death—a religion of practice and tranquil living, but not in any way a theological battle-ground for the acrimonious definition of the undefinable.

The miracle of the Bo-Tree would otherwise have been a sad stumbling-block. In what sense, after the attainment of Nirvana and its renunciation, was the Buddha still mortal? Human weakness had entirely passed from

Him: omniscient, omnipotent, what was His nature? Was He perfect Truth, undefiled with mortality, a simulcral embodiment, in phantom flesh, of the Divine Spirit? or had He still man in him, conjoined with the divine? Obviously this is exactly the same difficulty that arose in the train of the Incarnation theory and the deification of Jesus; and if the mystery of the Buddha had fallen into the subtle metaphysical minds of the Hellenistic and Levantine Bishops who made such internecine war and mischief over their discussions as to the dual nature of Jesus, exactly the same depressing result would have punished the Buddhist prelates for such a desertion of the profitable path of good-living for the unprofitable slough of imaginary knowledge on matters where there can never be room for anything but valueless personal opinion and assertion.

Of course, to the simple early monk, to the plain sensible man and the student of history, the Buddha, like the Christ, is simply our fellow-man, and brother to ourselves, but who has attained the highest possible degree of human wisdom, which is divine. There is nothing metaphysical or miraculous to be troubled about anywhere in the whole question. All men, in their way, are gods; the perfect man is perfect god. There is no need to subtilize or web a plain truth over with pious myth. Unfortunately, however, the priestly mind is as common as the historical, abounding in both sexes and in every rank or profession. And the priestly mind must have more than this—must have much more—must have visible gods and earthly intermediaries, and miracles and dogmas and definitions, and every sort of picturesque obfuscation for plain prosaic truth. And when you combine the priestly temperament with the subtle disputatiousness of the Greek or Hellenistic mind, the result hardly bears thinking of. So the Levantine priests—Greek, Asiatic, hybrid—seized on

Jesus, made Him unrecognizable, and His religion a mere series of disputes about His nature—whether divine or human, or both, or neither, or all, or what. There was no end to it, of course, and no profit. It was the problem of the precedence of owl and egg. But men could die for it, and kill each other for it, and flood their cities with blood, and destroy their dynasties and empires and national vitality.

But the priestly mind has never been able to make such complete prey of Gautama—for one reason, because Gautama's revelation is so much wider, so much more complete, so impregnably logical and coherent that you cannot weave in fantasies without breaking them on the sharp rocks of the Buddha's own spoken word. For it must never be forgotten that Gautama's ministry of five-and-forty years has given Him an insuperable advantage over all other reformers. He was able to answer every question that occurs in experience, to show how His truth extends eternally over every field of life ; He had time to state very definitely what did and did not belong to His creed, what His Church was to do, and what it was not to do. And thus His Church, abound though it did in minds of the fatal priestly tinge, never had the latitude of invention and theologizing and subtilizing that the premature death of Jesus left to the men who then took up His uncomprehended, incomplete work and twisted it into something that its founder would never have recognized or borne with.

Immediately outside the precinct of the Holy Tree there stands the forest of stone pillars that marks the ground-floor of the Great Brazen Palace, the main abbey building of the Maha Vihara. In a flat expanse of green they stand, sixteen hundred enormous columns of squared grey stone, arranged in rows of forty. In its first

splendour there were nine stories raised from this impressive ground-floor, and each story had a hundred rooms for the monks. The lower orders dwelt on the higher floor, the holier ones and the more learned had the middle of the building, and the top-floor was appropriated to those who had attained to first-class sainthood. On this statement two reflections occur to me. If I were a saint, and had my choice, I would certainly not dwell in the topmost of nine stories, in a building without a lift or a fire-escape, especially as the Great Brazen Palace was undoubtedly built very largely of wood, and lighted with lamps. In the second, how fecund must Ceylon have been in those days with first-class saints! A clear hundred must have been mustered here, and mustered without difficulty too. What pains should we nowadays have in all our Churches to collect as many as ten! But those were the pious giant days, hardly a century later than Sanghamitta the Abbess and King Darling of the Gods, when, at Duttha Gamini's bidding, the Brazen Palace rose a hundred feet and more into the blue sky—a tremendous square block, all rich with carving, moulding, gilding, colour: and roofed with bronze, till it flashed and flashed again under the dazzled day.

But the splendour of the edifice did not last long, and those who had attained sainthood must have been greatly diminished in numbers; for before many generations had passed a monk upset a lamp, and the whole of the Brazen Palace was burnt to the ground. It was rebuilt immediately, of course, but not to its former magnificence, and only rose to seven stories. Then came King Maha Séna the heretic, who followed the Vetuliya Scriptures, and he demolished the Brazen Palace of the Maha Vihara, to use its materials for the glorification of his schismatic abbey at Abhayagiriya, and in many ways grievously op-

pressed the Maha Vihara. But at last even the King realized that he could not stand nor preserve his popularity against the opposition of the Great Abbey. Accordingly he reconciled himself with it, and rebuilt the Brazen Palace. And so the history goes, of alternate restoration and destruction by invader or impoverished monarch, until in the reign of P'rakram' Bahu the Great the whole building was reported to be in a pitiful state of ruin. The magnificent King accordingly had all the pillars set up again, and rebuilt the entire block on the exact scheme of its original erection by Duttha Gamini in the second century B.C., so that what we see now is the ground-plan and skeleton of a restoration that repeated accurately the first founder's intention.

And now it is a wretched sad relic: vast and innumerable are the squared columns, all standing in their places, a very forest of stone. But, stripped and bare, they look mere beams of rock, stuck up on end. One has to coat them in one's mind with every imaginable device of moulding, stucco, gold and paint, and then, upon them, raise, story by story, far into the sky, that solid cube of magnificence, regular and awful, flashing with metals, brilliant with painting, latticed, domed, and beautified in every way. And thus, in its time, was undoubtedly the Brazen Palace, most splendid building of the splendid Maha Vihara. Fallen, indeed, is the glory of Lanka, in a worldly sense, since the day when monks in their thousands and abbots in rich vestments attended the services of the Holy Tree. Now the Abbot of Maha Vihara has but a scanty handful of followers, and a scanty tenement to the left of the Tree's precinct, whence at evening he comes without pomp, leaning on his pastoral staff of ivory and old lacquer, to preside over the ritual of the Tree. This is the hour when the deserted temenos awakes to life.

MOONSTONE OF AN OLD ABBEY (CALLED "THE QUEEN'S PALACE), ANURADHAPURA.

All through the day the precinct lies empty and silent; perhaps some lonely monk is sweeping the leaves in the inmost enclosure of the Tree, or refreshing the flowers on the altars. But for his presence, though, the shaded square is silent and empty. Then evening falls, blue, profound, mysterious, and the boughs of the trees, sacred or profane, all melt into the inscrutable profundity of night, and the religious activity of Anuradhapura begins. The bells summon to service at the eastern altar of Ruanwéli Dâgaba across the park, and the drums throb loud through the dusk at the gateway of the Holy Tree. Lamps quiver and glow in the blackness—lamps before the shrines, lamps at the porch, lamps by the stairway—great golden stars in that velvety blue twilight, through which rhythmically sound the drums and the bells. By the main entrance sit the flower-sellers, offering little baskets, tight-packed with scented bloom of temple-flower, jasmine, champak, gardenia. These are for the altars of the Lord Buddha; not symptoms of humanity's adoration for a god—though that is what it comes to, of course, since thankfulness, carried to its furthest lengths, amounts to deification—but infinitesimal marks of a love and gratitude that the longest life of goodness and happiness could not adequately express for Him who showed the means of both; symbols, too, of the evanescence and unreality of earthly joy, since in an hour their white sweetness will be mere brown putrescence; and yet in their way, too, symbols of real permanence. For beauty is a manifestation of that truth which is God—the thing eternal, absolute, divine; and, in so far as any object has beauty, even only beauty to the eye, that object partakes of the eternal and the eternal joy, and cannot utterly pass away, no matter how soon its visible component parts are reduced to their elements, and vanish in decay and transformation.

The crowd gathers thickly, the very poorest eager in their adoration of the Master; the yellow-robed come round from their cloister; the Abbot arrives for the evening service. Vain, I suppose, it is to protest against the use of such utterly misleading words as "priest" and "high priests" in talking of the Buddhist Church? All English in Ceylon, even if they might know better, allow themselves this gross and ridiculous error. Buddhism knows no high priest, no priest of any sort—no intermediary at all between man and his possibilities. Heaven and divinity lie in our own souls; we, and we alone, are able to grasp them, develop them, attain them for ourselves. There is no outside agency that can help us, intercede, deprecate, or in any way come between us and the logical outcome of our own acts, here and hereafter.

The Buddhist Church, then, so called, has no ministers of religion; the monks are merely men who have taken certain vows of retirement for the perfecting of themselves in wisdom, that they may be better able to devote themselves to the happiness of the world. For do not think (as is so often said in reproach by Christians, as if Christianity or any other religion had any other *raison d'être* than the salvation and realization of one's own soul) that they are merely seeking their own perfection in a cold and callous egoism. For the Buddha taught clearly that while self-perfection means the attainment of the great goal, yet that self-perfection can only be attained through absolute self-abnegation, through persistent, invariable, and *happy* thought of others and their happiness; therefore, the monk has his place in life, and his career should never be one of mere selfish retirement. Still less should it be one of sloth. It is a life of intense, almost agonizing, upward striving, an energy of improvement that must never flag or cease. And among his duties, of course, is that of

observing the festivals and helping the laity; therefore it is that the monks and abbots are the ministers of the outward cult, ordain ceremonies, perform them, and keep the people in the way of due observance.

But they have no supernatural grace or power at all. Their ministrations have no mystical efficacy; they cannot influence in any degree the future life and development of the man who bends before the altar. They are *not* priests; can neither loose nor bind, damn nor save. The man himself alone can do either. But, in a big organization, order and hierarchy must inevitably creep in, and perhaps the purity of intention decays with ages. It is needful that vowed bodies of brethren should have their rules and their overseers; hence the development of bishops, abbots, and a vast body of regulations, which ultimately tend to become merely pharisaical and ridiculous, concentrating their victims' attention rather on the rules themselves than on the holy, free, inquiring spirit which those rules were originally designed to protect and foster.

For of all faiths, that of the Buddha makes most demands on energy of mind. The Buddha wants a man to doubt, inquire, and be honestly convinced before following His way. Conversion by miracle, by an orator, by sorrow or emotional exhaustion, is a thing impermanent, valueless, equivalent to no conversion at all. The mind of the monk and the convert must for ever be moving forward, questioning, sifting, discussing, weighing — never sitting tight in an unreasoned conviction that somebody else's unsupported statements are true, or that truth was crystallized by a saint or a council of five hundred years ago; but perpetually working to widen the field of knowledge, discarding the irrelevant, the second-hand, the traditional, if their value be proved to have evaporated; and from new revelations perpetually

extracting larger revelations of truth that stand the fullest test of reason, and satisfy the whole being before they may be ecstatically embraced by the emotions—those blind leaders of the blind, but admirable followers of a sound guide. This is the Way of the Buddha, in which, it is clear, there is no room for priest or authority ; for, however wise may be a preacher, you are to accept his word, not because he is a wise preacher, but because you yourself are convinced on due reflection that he really *is* a wise preacher, and speaks truth, too, on the particular matter in question. His monkhood, his prioret, his abbacy, give him no sort of authority; it is only his truth that gives him his authority, quite independent of whether he claim it or you concede it. For it is his truth, and his truth only, that *is* the man. He has no other existence ; his ministry, his mitre, his very manhood, are pale irrelevant details belonging to the phantom world of sense.

CHAPTER XV

RUANWÉLI DÂGABA

EMERGING from the precincts of the Holy Tree, one finds oneself, of course, in the very core and kernel of the Sacred City, on the triply holy ground where you have the Bo-Tree behind you, the Brazen Palace immediately to your right, and in front across the park Ruanwéli and Thûparâma. Now, when the secular and official settlement was founded about half a century ago, the Government chose this ground for building purposes, and the bungalows of the magistracy with their red-brick church are dotted over the green that lies to the left between the Holy Tree and the dâgabas of Ruanwéli and Mirisawétiya. To this, in the lapse of ages, no one could take exception, and no one has taken exception. The Mahamegha Garden, made over to the ecclesiastics by Devanampiyatissa in the third century B.C., no doubt covered all this tract of land; but through many years of abandonment, it is impossible to claim the integrity of the whole donation, now that the very limits and features of the Mahamegha Garden have long been lost. Therefore the Church acquiesces in the occupation of this once holy spot in the heart of the Sacred City by secular activities, and does not even resent the establishment of a Christian Church within bow-shot of the Holy Tree itself.

But, unfortunately, there arose unhappier developments, for the Government naturally required a bazaar for the

native buyers and sellers, and chose to situate that bazaar at the very gateway of Bo-Tree's precinct. And there, before the Holiest Place, drink was sold and animals' dead limbs exposed for sale. Now, though drink and butcher's meat are admirable things, and necessities for some people, if there is one spot in the world where they have no place, it is at the gate of a place sacred to Him who has for ever declared that both the publican and the brewer are plying unholy and illicit crafts, trading, the one on the moral degradation of his kind, the other on the physical suffering of his kind—all life being of one kind. And the establishment of these shops at the entrance to the precinct was felt an undeserved and cruel insult, perpetrated by want of thought, perhaps, but cruel and wounding none the less. The feeling was strong and general, but a Buddhist mob is incapable of violence or sedition. The crowded annual festival of the pilgrimage went off eagerly and orderly as ever, and there was no sign of trouble, deeply as the people grieved over the desecration of their shrine and the reproach offered to their Master. For the troubled situation arose, in fact, from a mere error in taste. Established elsewhere, the butchers' shops and drink-booths would have been admitted as necessities, considering the needs of the European settlement. It was their situation that occasioned the grievance. A tavern, a brothel, may be a very profitable, pleasant place; but a tactful Turkish Governor would not institute either in the Garden of Gethsemane or the heart of the Holy Sepulchre. Yet, *mutatis mutandis*, this is what had been done at Anuradhapura.

At last the inevitable crisis developed. One of the native officials accidentally knocked down an old woman of the pilgrimage, and rode on to his house without further remark. The victim's husband ran after him to

draw his attention to what he had done, and, mistaking his object, a hostile crowd soon gathered. A certain demagogue, so fluent in English that one is apt to find his style more offensive than it was probably meant, because one fails to realize, from his fluency, how little he really understands the shades and inflections of the language he is so volubly using, had long been at the head of discontent. A mob of riff-raff had come up from Colombo for the lark of a row, and it was these, on the first sign of trouble, that precipitated matters. From the ensuing violence the whole pilgrimage held entirely aloof; entirely aloof stood the great abbots and the population of Anuradhapura. But the mob from Colombo, merely in disorder and from no religious motives, broke down the obnoxious bazaar, destroyed the buildings, and then, off on a new trail, went and sacked the Roman Catholic Church. The result of all this was a long trial and much discredit; ultimately, the offending shops were moved further away into a spot less outraging to Buddhist feeling. But at the same time the harm was done—a spirit of suspicious dislike encouraged in the Government, a certain feeling of wrong and injustice engendered in the Church. Considering the deliberate impermanence of Cinhalese buildings—mere wood and plaster—and the ease with which they are moved, it is not, perhaps, too much to hope that some wise Governor of the future will move the whole settlement of Anuradhapura to a less sacred spot, and to a spot nearer the railway for the convenience of travellers; for at present the station is more than half a mile from the town, a strange and unnecessary inconvenience.

From all this it is difficult for the officials to look with a very sympathetic eye upon the Church. It is far more easy to dislike and slander men when their views oppose

yours, than to study their work and their opinions in the favouring light of truth. The officials are, in all cases, anxious to be strictly just; but they cannot avoid a certain bias, and are apt to take it too readily for granted, I think, that the monks are a lazy, shifty, feeble lot, simply because the assumption is easier and more comfortable for busy men who have no time to sift such matters. Quite possibly the monks may be all this: it is pleasanter to think that, quite possibly, they are not. Nobody, however, has made any solid attempt to find out the truth about them without fear or favour. One meets everywhere the accepted view, for which there is no more stable foundation than, indeed, for any favourable hypothesis. Their rights may be respected; their point of view is not considered. And their position is a difficult one. They are ecclesiastics and dignitaries, and therefore attached to the pomps and appanages of their Church; they represent an omnipotent force, which once owned all this city, and held the land in undisputed sway. Yet now they are nothing. The bare shrines are left to them, and diminished endowments; but their power is gone. Christian missionaries invade their territory, and they exist on sufferance—simply licensed heathen, called "priests" to make them sound more heathen still. It is impossible but that there should be saints among them; the whole multitude, however, is lumped by official opinion in the condemnation of the inevitable black sheep, and it is not from servants of the Government that you can gain any really convincing view of the servants of the Church.

With the planters, of course, the situation is far worse. The official is a man of education, in most cases anxious to know something of the country in which he is working, and in all cases anxious to do the best work he can for it. To the average planter, though, it would seem that Ceylon

is too often simply a conquered country of heathen, in which his only interest is to make money as soon as possible and then clear out. And while he is there, though, it is simply the waste land "east of Suez, where the best is like the worst, where there ain't no Ten Commandments, and a man can raise a thirst." There his concern with the island ends; of its history, faith, and civilization he too often has no thought. He makes his toy Surbiton at a toy Grasmere, and is more or less unhappy in the pretence of English life. The native is simply his slave, the monk his pet antipathy, for whom no slander can be too foul or preposterous. Of the Church he talks with the blank, uncomprehending rage with which Attila's men-at-arms must have spoken of St. Leo and his priestly escort.

Ruanwéli Dâgaba lies close to the Residency, just beyond the railings that separate the Residency garden from the open park. You have to cross its precinct—or you generally do so—on your way to the Thûparâma. Ruanwéli is a gigantic mass, but to me the least imposing of the great dâgabas. It is so large and so crumbled that one can never get any real idea of its size. The drum is ruined about half-way up, and the rest of the dâgaba is a mountain of grass, on the apex of which totters drunkenly a ball and spicule of glittering metal. The Abbot has been busy for many years now in the restoration of the building, and a rickety wooden ladder gives access to the last uppermost line of brickwork. Eager hands flock to the labour, which, nevertheless, does not seem to advance. The worldly tell a tale, which may or may not be true, but which is, in any case, illuminating. For the godly gain goodness in carrying bricks up the ladder for the rebuilding of the dâgaba, and the Abbot has fixed a little booth below, where bricks are to be pur-

chased by the pious. The pious accordingly buy them, and carry them up to the top; and then, in the silent night, says rumour, the Abbot, better armed with the wisdom of serpents than with the softness of doves, has all those bricks brought secretly down again, and on the morrow the holy traffic is renewed as before. Anyhow, Ruanwéli Dâgaba is not, as I said, advancing very rapidly to its restoration, but whether this be the dreadful reason I cannot tell.

The drum of Ruanwéli, circled by its procession-paths, stairways, and carvings, rises from an enormous square pavement. And this, in turn, is surrounded by a broad, shallow moat, whose outer slope is now thick with coppice of small shrubs and thorny weeds, whose fine spikes adhere to one's legs, much aggrieving and empeshing one's progress. At the cardinal points of the compass rise from the platform the four altars of the dâgaba, though lesser shrines and slabs of stone lie scattered on the paved expanse. The eastern shrine is the most frequented; it is near this that the monks and Abbot have their dwellings; here are large chapels, bells, booths; it is here that the famous bricks are on sale; and it is from here that the sweet clangour calls so clearly to evening worship through the quiet twilight. If you come by the eastern face of Ruanwéli then, you will see the little chapels all aglow with lights; beneath the looming darkness of the dâgaba and through the gentle crowd of worshippers the attendant monks and Abbot go to and fro. At this eastern point, too, were the stately propylaia and portico of Ruanwéli. Ruined beams and pillars lie thick on the grass or totter; even across the road beyond there stretch foundations and strewn remnants of stone from the abbey buildings. In its great day Ruanwéli Dâgaba was very splendid. Rich are the carvings round the drum, with its circular path for

ecclesiastical processions; a gorgeous sight it must have been—scores of thousands crowding the pavement in festal array, many hundred prelates attending the King and his Court as they made the circuit of the dome. The reredos of each altar is high, and magnificently carved with heads of elephants and monsters: and the pavement was further adorned with statues. Here and there have they been found of late days, buried in the moat, or tumbled about amid the débris, and the five finest have been decently set up beneath a pent-house of straw, alongside of the main eastern chapel. The first of these is a King, possibly the founder, Duttha Gamini (and possibly anybody else)—a really fine piece of work—elaborate, abundantly jewelled, hieratic, convincing. The others represent the four bygone Buddhas of this present era, who are all, in their day, supposed to have lent this place its supreme sanctity by alighting here. Aligned they stand, Dipánkara, Kakusandha, Kasyapa, Gautama—calm, placid faces, staring out above us into the unplumbed depths of twilight and eternity. Big and blank and stolid are they; but one has a suave, delicate charm beyond the others—a mouth loftily smiling, filled with pleasantness, supreme over the world and all its shadows—surely this must be the Most Perfect One Himself, that was the Buddha Gautama.

The huge square pavement of Ruanwéli is borne up on all sides by a wall that rises from the moat, and every yard of that wall is made up of kneeling elephants. Without a break, except for a stairway in the middle of each wall, stretches the imposing line of monsters, bearing, it seems, on their backs, the unimaginable weight of the platform and the dome. They were built of brickwork, these beasts, coated with plaster and mouldings and colour; their trappings were of gold and jewels, their tusks of the

natural ivory, inserted into sockets. And there, to this day, are the sockets, blind holes of darkness, in the cheek of each blurred, crumbling face ; but the ivory tusks, the jewels and gold, have long since vanished from their places. Broad is the moat, broad and grass-grown, a pleasant place to walk. Where, in the centre of each side, a flight of steps leads up to the platform, stand bowed old temple-trees, loaded with their blooms, and here and there, beneath their shade, some fading inscription of a bygone ruler, some broken effaced statue of Buddha, King or Abbot. And in the scrub that rises on the further side stands up, gigantic and formidable as Cleopatra's Needle, the plain stone obelisk that once made the finial of the dâgaba, before King Sanghatissa the First replaced it with a pinnacle of glass to safeguard the dome from lightning. This King reigned some thirty years after the monarch Voháraka Tissa, who drew his first name from the illustrious fact that he abolished the use of torture throughout the land, about the year 215 A.C. But Sanghatissa loved, like our Elizabeth, to go on progress; and his subjects, like hers, found his peregrinations come terribly expensive, as he travelled in high splendour with all his Court. Especially did he love to go to Pacina Island, there to enjoy its famous jambu-fruit, and so at last they would bear no more, and on one of his progresses offered the King a dish of medicated jambu-fruit—the Cinhalese equivalent of an Italian fig. So King Sanghatissa ate: and died in 248 A.C.: and Siri Sanghabodhi reigned instead. He was a saintly and beneficent monarch. Once, in a bitter drought, the King laid himself down upon the platform of Ruanwéli, and swore that he would not rise from that spot until rain had fallen sufficiently to float his body. So the rain flowed down immediately, and the whole land was deluged. But all the water flowed off

the platform of Ruanwéli, through its drains and gutters; the Ministers saw that the King would never be floated until the whole island was submerged. Then they blocked up the drains of the great square, and the water thus mounted until the King's body floated. So the King rose up at last, "and thus did this all-compassionate person dispel the horrors of the drought."

King Siri Sanghabodhi, like gentle Upatissa the Second a century later, was no friend to severity of legislation. The land was infested with robbers, but when they were caught and condemned the King would release them privately, and then in their stead cause the bodies of people who had died natural deaths to be burned at the stake—"thus," says the Mahavansa, "assuaging the affliction occasioned by those robbers," though one doesn't quite see how. Then a demon came over on a visit to Lanka—a demon of Ophthalmia, who was known as Red-eye. People who met in the roads would look at each other and exclaim, "Why, *your* eyes are red too!" and thereupon drop down dead, and the monster immediately devoured their corpses. The King was terribly afflicted by this, and in his misery took special vows, and swore that he would not rise from his seat until he saw the monster in visible bodily presence. So the Demon Red-eye appeared before him, and they talked the matter out.

"Who are you?" said the King.

"I am the Demon Red-eye," replied his visitor.

"Why do you devour my people?" said the King; "cease to devour them."

"Let me have one districtful at least," pleaded Red-eye.

"Quite impossible," replied the monarch.

"Well, just one village," begged the demon.

"The only thing I can give you is myself," declared the King.

And then it was the demon's turn to say, "Quite impossible"; and he ultimately compromised for a mere offering of rice at the entrance of every village.

And thus the plague was stayed.

But soon after that the Prime Minister rose in rebellion against the King, and marched upon Anuradhapura. And King Siri Sanghabodhi could not bear the thought that men should die and slay one another for the sake of his evanescent earthly dominion. So he went out from his royal city quite alone, carrying with him only his water-strainer, by which he insured the safety of all little flies and insects whenever he should drink. And on the highway he met a peasant with a meal of dressed rice, and the peasant, not knowing that this was the King, pressed the stranger to partake of his food. Then the King ate of the rice, and drank his water, and made a meal, and his heart was large with gladness over the charity and goodness of this poor man. But he had no treasure—not so much as a penny—to give him in return. One thing alone he had, the most precious of all. "Beloved," he said, "I am Siri Sanghabodhi, the King. Take my head, then, and carry it to Gothâbhaya, that was my Minister and now is King in my place. So shall he give you a worthy reward of riches." But of course the peasant started in horror from the idea. So the King, there where he sat, severed his head from his shoulders, and died, and the peasant, in his astonishment, carried the head to King Gothâbhaya. And even greater was the astonishment of King Gothâbhaya when he heard the tale. He conferred much wealth on the peasant, and showed him all the kindliest offices of a King.

Ruanwéli Dâgaba is one of the earlier foundations in Anuradhapura. It comes after Thûparâma, Mirisawétiya, the Bo-Tree, and the Brazen Palace, and was the work of

the noble King Duttha Gamini after he had destroyed the alien occupation of Elala, the Tamil monarch, and re-established his dynasty at Anuradhapura. "Our battles are over now," said the King, and settled down to peace, allotting rich estates to his faithful marshals. But the mightiest of them all, the bravest hero, the King's best friend, refused his reward. "War is not over," he said; and when the King inquired his meaning, the old soldier answered that now he must make his hardest war of all,—against sin and passion, those stalwart enemies. And so at last, with much prayer, he won the King's consent, and became a monk on a far hill-side remote from the world, where he soon attained sanctity. Meanwhile the King also, on his throne, was following holiness, and building many a notable shrine. So, having finished Mirisawétiya and the Brazen Palace, he set himself to design a thûpa, that should be the greatest of all thûpas, on the spot sanctified in tradition by the presence of the four bygone Buddhas.

Miracle, naturally, assisted his zeal—coral and huge pearls came floating to the surface of the sea, silver was discovered in the heart of the hills, and four gigantic gems were discovered in a sandbank, through which a stream was flowing from the broken embankment of a lake. Thus, all materials and enrichments having been collected, the King set himself to the building of Ruanwéli, and, by an unusual effort of wise goodness, abrogated his royal prerogative, and duly paid the labourers for their toil, instead of making the building a corvée, as the Kings were in the habit of doing, before his time and after it. Assisted by the whole Church, the King laid the foundation-stone in full royal state, and for the occasion provided baths and attendants, barbers, dressers, clothing, flowers, and savoury food, that all his people might hold

festival. But his first scheme was too gigantic to be accomplished. This was pointed out by a very holy abbot, and the King, though his zeal was eager to build the biggest dâgaba he could, yet yielded to the persuasions of the prelates and diminished the design. Meanwhile the Church was there present in incalculable multitudes, and from every part of the world. India and Kashmir contributed armies of bishops and streams of treasure, and at the head of many thousand monks came the wise Abbot Dhammarakkhita "from Alasanda, the capital of the Yona land." Now Yona, or Yuna, is, we know, the Oriental version of Ionia, and broadly used as equivalent for Greek; and "Alasanda, the capital of the Yona country," can surely, then, be nothing less than Alexandria, the capital of Alexander's Greek Empire. We know for certain that the missionaries of Asoka had penetrated far across Europe —not to mention the wandering evangelists who, in the Buddha's own day, were sent into the West; that there were actually crowded Buddhist viharas round Alexandria itself, out of which Christian monasticism ultimately developed: and Buddhist settlements round the Dead Sea, which gave birth to the Essenes, to John the Forerunner, and to Jesus. In any case, the founding of Ruanwéli Dâgaba was made the occasion of such a gathering of the hierarchy as the world had never seen before, and the good King Duttha Gamini was anxious that all the ecclesiastics should partake of his hospitality during the whole period of the building's erection. But this tremendous offer was declined by the prudent Churches, who would only live at the King's charges for a week; and even so, it was but a half of the multitude that would stay so long. So the King built eight roomy palaces for them, and was filled with joy, and entertained them for that week, and afterwards, the foundation being

accomplished, the prelates departed, each to his own place.

Then the King called for five hundred bricklayers, and laid the matter out for contract. "How much work in a day will you do?" was the King's question. And one by one their answers were dismissed as inadequate, until at last the most intelligent of them satisfied the King. Then came the question of shape; the King knew that no grass nor weed must grow on a dâgaba's walls, so he inquired in what form the builder proposed to erect the dome to obviate this difficulty. And the architect was suddenly inspired. He filled a golden bowl with water, and then, taking some up in the palm of his hand, he slapped it down into the bowl again, and amid the splash there flew up a globule of water like a crystal ball. "Thus will I build the dâgaba," he announced. The King was delighted with him, and gave him many rich presents, including a pair of splendid slippers.

So with miraculous swiftness and ease the work went forward, the only trouble being that the pious were too anxious to bless themselves with doing some voluntary labour for the dâgaba, which, it had been decided, was to be achieved by paid labour only. Monks and abbots disguised themselves, and forged bricks, and did all they could to contribute to the holy toil. And meanwhile the paid labourers in their thousands were turning daily to the Light, which is the Buddha. Two women who had worked for Ruanwéli then died, and were born again in the Tavatinsa heavens for the reward of their merits; and, remembering those merits, descended with flowers to do honour to the thûpa. And these lovely spirits came by night, and by night also it happened that the abbot Mahasiva had gone privately to worship at the shrine. So there he saw them, and discerned by their miraculous

effulgence that they were good angels, and asked them for what high deed it was that they had attained so radiant a destiny. And they answered him: "By our work done at the building of the Great Thûpa." And so he spread the tale.

Apparently, however, the foundations must have been weak, for the Mahavansa tells us that the building subsided again and again. The chronicle, of course, puts this miracle to the charge of the wise prelates, and says that the King ultimately convened an Œcumenical Council to discuss the matter; whereupon the abbots told him that these subsidences had been arranged to guarantee the building against any more subsidences in the future, and that such a thing would not occur again, so that the work might continue without further concern: all of which happened as they said. And now comes the enshrinement of the relics. What they were it seems hard to gather, so wrapped up is the account of them in splendours and miracles. In any case, it would be idle to catalogue the prodigality of gold and jewels in which the precious things were coated, clothed, encircled, hedged round, and built in. On the appointed day King Duttha Gamini, in pomp untellable, translated a "dona-ful" of relics to their place in his Maha Thûpa, and there laid them in the sight of the assembled Church.

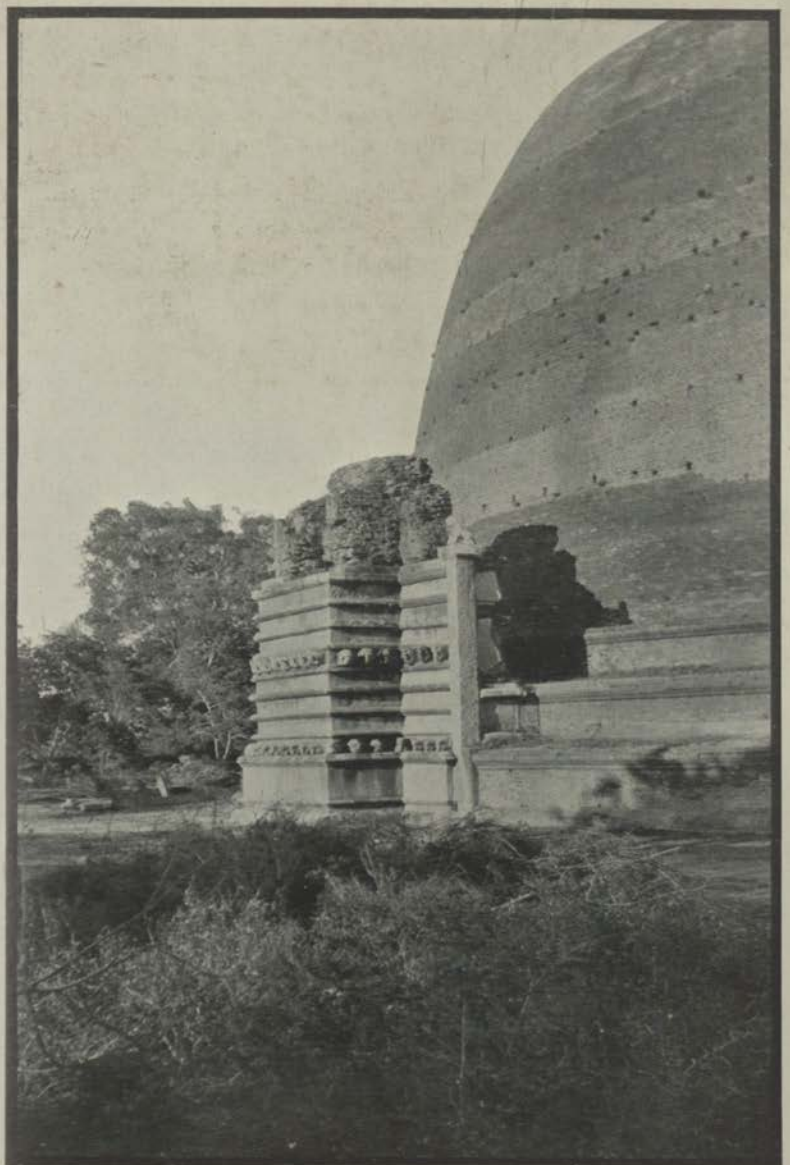
After this the dâgaba was to be completed, with the poising of its spire and its coating of snowy glaze. But in these latter days King Duttha Gamini fell ill of an incurable disease, and his hours were clearly numbered, so he sadly sent for his brother Tissa, and handed over to him the task of completing Ruanwéli. But Tissa knew that the heart of the dying King was set on seeing his Maha Thûpa finished and perfect before he passed from the world, so Tissa covered all the dâgaba with white

cloth, and had it painted and glazed, and fully adorned. And then he got parasol-makers to rig up a towering spire of bamboo framework, which was then covered in and decorated fitly with painting and lacquer. So Tissa went in then to the King, and told him that the work of the thûpa was finished, and Duttha Gamini had himself carried on his bed to the southern entrance (so that the stone at the Eastern Gate which is called Duttha Gamini's death-bed cannot be authentic), and there he alighted and laid himself down on a carpet, so that, lying on his right side, he could see the full splendour of this new gigantic dome, and then, turning to the left, the whole nine-storied magnificence of the Great Brazen Palace he had made for the Maha Vihara; so there, rapt in contemplation, lay the King, and around him stood all the bishops and abbots in their myriads, chanting hymns of consolation for the peace of the monarch's soul.

But the King looked round among his prelates, and his heart was saddened. "Where is my faithful old soldier-friend?" he thought. "Eight-and-twenty pitched battles have we fought side by side, and he never faltered or yielded an inch. Yet, now that he has taken the vows and is a monk, he will not come near me, although he knows that I am on the edge of death, on the eve of my great defeat." But far off on the mountain-side the monk, in his meditation, was aware of the King's thought, and in a flash he was there at the King's side, attended by five-and-twenty of his disciples. And the dying man was overjoyed to see his friend, and made him sit before him, and thus spoke: "You were one of my ten warriors that always supported me in battle; but now I stand alone in this my last battle—with death. No hope have I of proving victor in this mortal duel." Then the monk that had been a mighty warrior lifted up his voice to the

King's comfort, and caused the dying man to think on all the good and splendid things he had done—how he had freed the land from invaders, and ruled purely, and done mighty things for the honour of the Holy One and the happiness of his people. So confidence and calm began to return to the heart of the King. He sent for his account-books, and caused his secretary to read aloud the tale of all the magnificent edifices he had raised, with their costliness and splendour—the Brazen Palace, Mirisawétiya Dâgaba, and now this Maha Thûpa of Ruanwéli. So went the noble and lengthy tale of benefactions, the story of the King's own humility and purity. But all this was dust and ashes, and brought no peace to the King as the secretary continued his interminable reading. The King broke in at last upon the tale, and recapitulated many things himself, public no less than private, and at the end he said: "... These many offerings that I made in the days of my prosperity give me now no comfort and relief at all. The only memories that comfort me now are two things that I did, without thought of myself, when I was poor and an outlaw."

Then the monk, his friend, gave him solace, and the King was made happy. Commending the kingdom and the dâgaba of Ruanwéli to Tissa his brother, Duttha Gamini dropped into silence, and the whole Church burst forth in a hymn for the ease of his passing. And, in a trance, the King was glorified by a visitation of angels that came and went in celestial chariots, calling upon him to join them in their heaven. But the King, almost beyond words, now, put out his hand to silence them, and show that while listening to the hymns of the Buddha, his heart could hold no other matter. Let them wait until the hymn was done, and then he would come. But the assembled monks and Abbots thought that he wished



THE DRUM (RESTORED) AND WESTERN ALTAR OF MIRISAWÉTIYA DÂGABA.

them to stop, so they ceased from their chant. The King would know why they thus stopped their singing, and they replied that they had thus interpreted his gesture of the hand. Then he had them disabused of the error, and explained his vision; but some of the prelates, seeing nothing, did not credit his story, but thought "the King is in anguish, overcome with the terror of death." This the old monk, the King's friend, perceived, and pondered how to convince them that the angels were indeed there in that place; so the King had wreaths of flowers cast into the air, and they hung to the points of the angelic chariots, and thus the doubters were convinced. And then the King turned to his old friend, and inquired which of the heavens might be the most delightful. The old monk answered that the "Heaven Tusitapura is a most delicious abode of spirits, according to the learned and pious, for it is in the Heaven Tusitapura that dwells the all-compassionate Bodhisatta, Maitreya, awaiting the hour of his fulfilment on earth." And having received that explanation, the King turned his eyes once more on Ruanwéli Dâgaba, and thus, stretched upon his bed, he gave up the ghost in silence."

Thus died Duttha Gamini, the strong and wise; the Mahavansa so loves him that it declares he will hereafter be the chief disciple of the Buddha Maitreya. His father and mother are actually to be father and mother of the Fifth Great Light. His son, Sali, is to be His son, and his younger brother, Tissa, the second disciple. Tissa on earth reigned for eighteen years in succession to his brother Duttha Gamini, and completed royally the designed splendours of Ruanwéli. As for Sali, the dead King's son, he laid aside his birthright, and retired into private life, and was content that his uncle should reign in his place, for, fortunate and altogether good, he fell in

love with a lady who was not *ebenbürtig* but of low caste and wholly impossible condition for a King's wife. This was the maiden Asókamâla, of extraordinary beauty, to whom Sali had been bound in foregoing existences; so these two knew each other again, and would not be parted—no, not for a crown royal; but the Prince gave up all his worldly claims for the sake of his love.

As for Ruanwéli Dâgaba, this was for many generations, perhaps, the most splendid sacred building in the Sacred City; but in course of time it was plundered and ruined, and restored and plundered again, and yet again restored. Its last complete restoration was that under P'rakram' Bahu the Great. Since that time the huge dâgaba slowly crumbled, and was savagely sacked by the invader Magha in the thirteenth century, though its foundation was, I fancy, never left entirely desolate and empty like that of Thûparâma. It must be borne in mind, too, that these gigantic dâgabas have suffered less from destruction than smaller shrines, like Thûparâma and "Lankarama." The despoiler's object is usually treasure, not demolition. Having emptied the relic-shrines at the heart of Ruanwéli or Abhayagiriya, nobody would wish to waste time trying to raze such a solid mountain of brickwork; whereas in a smaller shrine, such as Thûparâma, the easiest way to get at the treasures is to wreck the whole fabric. Therefore, when we look at Ruanwéli, we are probably, despite the fury of Magha, contemplating a good deal of the actual fabric of Duttha Gamini in the second century B.C. Subsequent restorations have been more concerned with renewing the plaster, weeding the walls, replacing the fallen spire, than with any actual rebuilding of the fabric itself. But alas for the skill of the architect who designed the building like a globule, to prevent accretions of weed and scrub on the walls! For now that the glazed

plaster has gone, greenery sprouts from every crevice of the brickwork, and so fast as the Abbot plucks it out, so fast does it grow again after the first fall of rain.

Controversy rages over the question as to whether Ruanwéli Dâgaba is or is not one of the Eight Sacred Places. For, though all Anuradhapura is, *ex hypothesi*, sacred ground, there are in the city eight spots of supreme traditional sanctity, whose holiness dates from the earliest, holiest days of the pure Faith. And the English Government has as hearty a wish to respect these places as the Church has to keep them in respect. The only trouble is that no one seems able to state definitely or with final authority what the Eight Sacred Places are. Colloquies and councils are incessantly being convened to arrive at some decision on the matter. It is obviously inconvenient for the Government to build, say, a post-office, and then have it discovered that one of the sacred eight has been desecrated; and a definite pronouncement on the point would go far to restore happiness and sympathy in Anuradhapura, whereas, at the present time, the Church, in its uncertainty, tends to look on the Government as hasty and inconsiderate, while the Government looks on the Church as mendacious and grasping. About two of the sacred places at least there is no doubt at all; those are the enclosure of the Holy Tree and the Thûparâma Dâgaba. Then, in every probability, the Holy Hill of Mihintalé is another; Issuruminiya Vihara; possibly the Sela Chaitya (though the whereabouts of this does not seem altogether certain; there is one candidate under Mihintalé, and another—an undistinguished little round pudding of a ruin—in the woodland between Ruanwéli and Abhayagiriya); and possibly the Brazen Palace. But the whole problem is very difficult, and the claims of Ruanwéli have a great deal to be said for them. It is not to be thought,

of course, that Abhayagiriya and Jétavánarâma are not holy; on the contrary, so sacred is Jétavánarâma that people accused still make their clearing oath in full legal form by the dâgaba and its relic. These eight places, however, are those most celebrated spots whose fame dates to the earliest days—to Duttha Gamini about 200 B.C., and to Devanampiyatissa a hundred years before, in the very dawn of the faith.

CHAPTER XVI

THE THREE GREAT DÂGABAS

For all their size, the great dâgabas do not dominate their neighbourhood as one might expect; the trees forbid them. It is almost uncanny, as one wanders through the woodland, to find oneself all of a sudden beneath the shadow of one of these gigantic buildings, towering high to heaven, where one had thought the forest continued, flat as one's palm. From the eastern altar of Ruanwéli one sees nothing before one but a dead level of jungle with ruins beneath. But an attractive ramble one may certainly have, and so, crossing the road, one wanders on amid the strewn remnants of the abbeys and palaces that once made part of Duttha Gamini's Maha Thûpa. Here is a broad flat slab of stone, which tradition calls Duttha Gamini's death-bed (with obvious untruth), and many another relic of bygone grandeur — pillars round or square, standing or fallen, sound or broken, standing or leaning in every direction like a mutilated forest of old dead trees. The foundation lines of the buildings have been laid bare, and one may gain some notion of the riches and magnificence of Ruanwéli and its abbey in the ancient days. Among other things is a carved urinal-stone, decorated with domed palaces and royal edifices, and from this we can rebuild in our minds the Brazen Palace and all these splendours round us, seeing how, from these very columns, accurately represented, there once rose

higher and higher stories, to be crowned with domes and towers above the ornate elaboration of their cornices. Then, if one wanders to the right, towards the Rest-house, there in its compound will you see one of the marvels of old monkish hospitality.

This is the Mahapali Alms-hall that once made part of Maha Vihara. Bared and excavated, the wide courtyard lies deep-sunk in the soil, and all along one side lies the stone trough. The four sides were lined with a cloister or series of small rooms under an arcade. And here it was that the multitudes gathered to their meal. For the alms-bowl is built on the model of a Cinhalese canoe—an enormous narrow trough about 50 feet long and 2 feet deep, or more. And this vast receptacle must be daily filled with rice for the feeding of the crowd. Even to this day the alms-bowl of the Mahapali remains so perfect and undamaged that a scrubbing would make it as fit for use as in the day when good King Aggabodhi the Second repaired it at the end of our sixth century. Our only task would be to find nowadays the lavish soul who would fill that deep channel with its mountains of rice. At the end of the tenth century the Mahapali was made good, probably for the last time, after a fire, and as Mahinda the Fifth then set it up, so, in all likelihood, it lies before us to-day, most illustrious of its kind, but not sole, for there are several other of these gigantic stone canoes—sometimes ridiculously called elephant-troughs—scattered about the ruins at Anuradhapura and Mihintalé.

Returning a little down the road towards Ruanwéli, one may plunge once more into the jungle and cleared woodland opposite the dâgaba. Here, as one goes deeper and deeper, a heavy green twilight reigns beneath the trees, and in the unmitigated level gloom the corpses of dead buildings lie humped beneath the soil, or overgrown

with weed, or naked and grim across bare earth. In the midst of this, bedded in copse and rough growth, stands the dim shape of a round building which is called the Sela Chaitya, and is supposed by some to have been one of the Eight Sacred Places. Alas! for this sacred place; its very outlines are utterly blurred, broken, and confused with ruin, collapse, and the invasion of jungle. Now it is a mere spoilt, half-liquefied jelly-mould, and it is all guess-work to rebuild the Sela Chaitya, and wonder whether it anticipated in the second century B.C. the beauties of carved stone and design that now make the Wata-dâ-Gé of Polonnarua so conspicuous among Cinhalese buildings,—or whether it were just a little ordinary dâgaba. This, at all events, is what it appears to-day—sad, perhaps, and suggestive, abandoned and overclouded there in the deep gloom beneath the trees; but otherwise it has no beauty nor commanding force, and lays heavy work on the imagination without holding out any solid hope that the labour is worth while. So, quitting the dumpy and pudding-like mass of Sela Chaitya, lost in its weeds, we advance through the woodland towards a cleared expanse that we can see before us through the trunks, shining in the hot sunlight beyond this darkness. And then, abruptly, far away above the trees, impends upon us terrifically, violently, the whole tremendous wooded mountain of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba.

Early in the first century B.C. King Vatta Gamini Abhaya was worsted by the Tamils, and fled from Anuradhapura. Now, as he went, he passed by this spot, says the legend—not recorded in the Mahavansa—on which, in those days, stood a Hindu temple, whose officiating priest was called the Giri. And, as the King fled by, the Giri stood in the temple-door, and mocked him, saying, "Look at the great black Cingalee running

away!" The King heard these impertinent words, and resolved that if ever he got the better of the invaders he would destroy the temple of the Giri, and put up a vihara in its place. All of which accordingly came to pass, and over the ruins of the temple there arose in due time the 400 feet of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba, dome and spire. Even in the King's time Abhayagiriya foundation, according to the Mahavansa, seems to have tended towards schism, but in later years the rift grew wider, and a rigid dislike reigned between the monks and abbots of Abhayagiriya and the Orthodox Church of the Maha Vihara, Thûparâma, Ruanwéli and Mirisawétiya—the youngest of them, Ruanwéli, older by nearly a century than the seceding foundation of Abhayagiriya.

The schism continued through the centuries, and the Mahavansa, written under orthodox hands, is always very cold and silent about Abhayagiriya and its endowments. But the heyday of the schismatic abbey was yet to come. About the year 254 A.C. King Gothâbhaya, once the rebellious Prime Minister of that saintly monarch Siri Sanghabodhi, nevertheless redeemed himself in the sight of the Mahavansa by developing into a champion of orthodoxy; he degraded the heretics, purged the Church, and banished sixty of the Abhayagiriya monks to India. They had adopted the uncanonical Vetuliya Scriptures, and were, says the Mahavansa, "as thorns in the religion of the Vanquisher." But, fired with the cause of these exiles, there came over from India the heresiarch Sanghamitta, a very clever man, and profoundly versed in the Demon Faith (that is the Mahavansa's tribute). By his wiles he completely won over King Gothâbhaya, and was made tutor to the two Princes, Jetthatissa and Maha Séna, of whom he preferred the younger, Maha Séna, and thereby provoked the enmity of the elder, Jetthatissa.

Therefore we hear little of him during Jetthatissa's reign. In fact, he was terrified at his former pupil's ferocity, and fled back to India. For Jetthatissa, finding that certain nobles, for reasons unspecified—perhaps they had been adherents of the dead rightful King Siri Sanghabodhi — were reluctant to attend his father's, King Gothâbhaya's, funeral, resolved to punish them, and read his whole people a definite lesson on disaffection. So, at the dead King's obsequies, the new King, Jetthatissa, sent his brother Maha Séna ahead with the corpse, and, forming up all the disaffected into a tail, closed the procession himself. Thus the cortège moved out of the capital, and as soon as the corpse was through the city gates the King caused them to be closed upon himself and the disaffected Ministers, whom he then and there had impaled on stakes, and so carried out and set up like honorific pillars round the funeral pyre of his father. No wonder that Sanghamitta fled out of the grip of a monarch so vivid and effectual in his dislikes, or that the Mahavansa, even though it has chronicled his subsequent benefactions to the Church, feels itself compelled to add: "Thus the regal state, like a vessel in which delicious sweets are mingled with the deadliest poison, may produce acts of the purest charity, together with deeds of the greatest atrocity. On no account, therefore, should a righteous man be anxious to attain this state."

However, after twelve years Jetthatissa died, and Maha Séna succeeded. The heresiarch Sanghamitta immediately returned to the side of his favourite pupil, and the fruits of his teaching became evident in the new King's opposition to the orthodox Church. Convinced that Abhayagiriya represented right opinion, and Maha Vihara an obstinate heresy, the King laid a very heavy hand on the Great Abbey. He dissolved the Order,

forbade anyone to give anything in charity to any of its monks, and ultimately destroyed the Brazen Palace, to use its materials of gold and bronze and stone and carving for the glorification of Abhayagiriya, which now was under his particular patronage. It was the fact that all the monks fled from the Great Abbey under his decree, and left the buildings desolate for nine years, that gave him this authority. The heresiarch persuaded him that unclaimed property lapsed to the Crown, and on that plea he laid hands on the Brazen Palace and demolished it. "By this impious proceeding," says the Mahavansa, "the Abhayagiriya Vihara attained much splendour at this period." But the Mahavansa slides very briefly over all the noble works that Maha Séna achieved for his dissenting foundation. How can good works done for a heretic abbey by a heretic King have any solid value?

The end of the story is very instructive, and between the lines of the monkish chronicle one can follow the lines of political development; for at last the Prime Minister could bear this impious state of things no longer, and revolted against his King, who duly took the field against him. One day the rebel's servants brought him a delicious meal of meat and drink, and as he sat before it he bethought him: "I cannot eat or drink these delicacies without sharing them with the King, who used to be my friend." And he took the goblet in one hand, and the dish in the other, and went over quite alone, secretly and by night, to the King's camp, where he revealed his identity and won admittance to the monarch's presence. So there at midnight those two, rebel and sovereign, who had once been friends, sat down and enjoyed the food that the rebel had brought. And when it was done Maha Séna said to his visitor: "Now, why did you turn traitor?" And the other answered: "Because you

destroyed the Great Abbey." The King was touched. "Forgive me," he replied. "I will rebuild the Great Abbey." So peace was made between them, and the King returned to Anuradhapura to set about the rebuilding of the Brazen Palace. At the same period, too, the heresiarch Sanghamitta and the wicked Minister, Sona, who had urged the King to all these iniquities, were opportunely murdered. The Sovereign returned to the orthodox fold, and the banished monks of Maha Vihara came back from exile from all quarters of the world to which they had fled.

Here, apparently, ends the grandeur of Abhayagiriya, but all trouble was not over even yet; for the King now fell under yet another bad influence—that of the unorthodox Abbot Tissa—"a vulgar person and an entertainer of sinners"—and insisted on founding Jétavánarâma Dâgaba on lands consecrated to the Maha Vihara. So again the Great Abbey was deserted, and there was much trouble, until at last the King desisted in despair from his efforts, and the monks of the Great Abbey once more returned, to punish and excommunicate the wicked Abbot Tissa of Jétavánarâma, who had accepted the King's unrighteous gift, and made it serve his own ambition; and that excommunication held, even against the personal influence of the King, who did everything he could to protect his friend. For all this the Abbot Tissa was degraded and unfrocked. The whole story is obviously that of a strong monarch who endeavoured to reduce the power of a haughty and ambitious Church, only to discover, after the apparent successes of his earlier years, that it was not possible for him to maintain his position permanently in face of the unpopularity raised against him by the Church. Ultimately he found it wiser to arrange a compromise with the orthodox party, and allow his own

nominee to be displaced against his will. The chronicle exaggerates the Church's triumph, but the King certainly went part of the way to Canossa.

Very magnificent even to this day are the ruins of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba. The dâgaba itself is now a mountain of forest, with four altars round its base at the four cardinal points, with platform and entrances and stairways as you will find in all the big dâgabas—vast solid domes that rise from a paved square like that of the Albert Memorial, but twice the size. Each altar and each reredos of Abhayagiriya is adorned with richer carvings than those of almost any other building—five-hooded cobra-kings, one-hooded cobra-queens, dwarfs, male and female, and splendid Renaissance convolutions of fruit and foliage in stone. The paint remains almost perfect on the altar-screens, whose decoration dates probably from the last restoration of the dâgaba under P'rakram' Bahu the Great in the twelfth century. All round the pavement lie to right and left the ruins of the abbey buildings, scattered now in hopeless confusion.

Abhayagiriya Vihara all down its history was more or less at enmity with the orthodox party of Maha Vihara, and has paid the penalty in the comparative scantiness of its history, as we have the chronicle from orthodox pens. And so we cannot tell much of the fate that befell the monastery buildings, nor know very much about this acreage of ruin that fills all the jungle round the base of the dâgaba. Harischandra identifies the big ruin by the western porch, lying parallel to the northern porch, with the hall described by the Chinese pilgrim-monk, Fa-hian, sixteen hundred years ago, where he commemorates a colossal figure of the Buddha, "two-and-twenty feet in height, carved from solid jasper, and adorned from head to foot with the seven resplendent jewels; while jewels,

too, in indescribable refulgence are used to outline the sacred marks and symbols, and an inestimable pearl is held in the right hand." Sacked and vanished is all this gorgeousness; nothing remains of the Buddha-hall but indistinguishable fragments; and scattered, too, most pitilessly has been the erection southward along the road, which no doubt formed part of the Abbey buildings, though whether it were alms-hall, preaching-ground, or ordination-hall, nobody can definitely say. Its rich moulded basement encloses a wide square area, which you enter by a flight of steps, supported on either side by carved columns. The whole is enclosed by a splendid railing of stone, cut in the round to imitate a fence of wattle, after the tradition of the even more magnificent Buddhist railings of Northern India. This sacred spot has been gutted with a rare ferocity, and the palisade is all in minutest fragments, from which the archæological commissioner must have had much difficulty in his work of restoring the few yards to right and left of the entrance flight of steps.

Tragic has been the fate of the enormous dâgaba itself. For very many centuries now the dome had been nothing but forest—dense and impenetrable forest of stout old trees. Tee and spire were rotting daily to their fall. In 1828 a heroic monk set himself to the clearing of the place—a monumental task, and one in which he was nearly rewarded with martyrdom, for a portion of the spire fell down and severely injured him. In 1882 the west front of the dome collapsed, bringing with it much of the tee, that had hitherto been perfect. In 1887 the dome was cut into by the authorities to discover the sacred books which were there said to be entombed. Nothing, however, was found but one fine reliquary and a quantity of oddments. But the explorers struck an earlier tunnel,

filled in with chance rubble and brickwork, which showed that devastators had, as was anticipated, been there before. But the last tragedy of the ruin began in 1890, when Sir Arthur Gordon decided to restore Abhayagiriya and Maha Seya Dâgaba at Mihintalé. No task could have been more meritorious or kindly. It is hardly to be believed that there were Christian orthodoxies in those benighted ugly days who actually raised protests against the wasting of labour and reverence over a heathen monument. However, the work went forward, as it should; and, if it had been well done, the world would now be richer.

Unfortunately, the tee and tower were rebuilt in the most ill-considered and hideous manner, the tee vastly too large for the dumpy, sham-ruined spire; both fat spire and tee a great deal too big and heavy for the dome beneath. Now, the charm and value of these huge dâgabas, as we shall see, is the perfect proportion of fine tapering spire and modest tee to the vast bulk of masonry which they surmount. In itself their design has little art—simply that of a gigantic claret-glass reversed, and with foot broken off; but proportion and grace of outline combine with their mountainous mass to give them impressiveness. Abhayagiriya, which once was imposing and awe-inspiring, is now merely a lump, devoid of grace or spirit—a wooded great wart on the woodland, surmounted by the mutilated half of a very obese factory chimney, planted on the middle of a square building, like the blind blank block of a prison. So much too heavy are these abortions of the 'nineties that the dome, though founded on an unplumbed depth of concrete, is incapable of supporting them. So inadequately have they been jerry-built, that they are already shifting, cracking, collapsing, though they have only been up a quarter of a century. Now it is hardly safe to make the ascent of the

spire by the interior staircase, which was the restorer's only good work. Everywhere there are widening cracks, that give more and more each month, and break the indication bonds of putty that are laid across them. The whole thing must soon come down. Already, a few years ago, while the inhabitants of Anuradhapura sat at home one wild wet night, they were startled by a noise of cataclysmal thunder, and thought that an earthquake was at hand. It was the entire western front of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba crashing down in ruin through the rain.

From the platform of the hideous tee one has a most glorious view, of course, over all the Sacred City and all its lakes; but as this view is less glorious than that of the Maha Seya Dâgaba at Mihintalé, and covers a smaller field, I need not linger now on that high place. Descending the break-neck little winding path that leads down from the tee over the ruined brickwork and crowded coppice of the dome, one returns at last to the platform at its base, and so, by the road, back to the enclosure of the Sacred Tree. Following on from this, one passes through the crowded, chattering streets of the bazaar, down the high-road to the Three Pools. These all lie very placid and lovely beneath the shade of vast green trees, spreading and brilliant like aged cedars, but with fine foliage of a velvety emerald. The Three Pools are fed from Tissavewa Lake to the left, across open meadows, low and marshy, starred with a flower of soft electric blue, clustered as Narcissus, protruded from a sheath in the stem like Tradescantia. The uppermost pool gleams quiet amid the thickets, and gives drinking-water to the city; the second, bright under the sun, and fringed with heavy colonies of bamboo, is always filled with bathers, men and women going down in their clothes, and then emerging happily after a splash to dry in the hot sun that beats

upon the soft scarlet of their garments, upon the lithe splendour of tall brown bodies or fat little dusky babies, spluttering and wallowing in the delightful coolness. From one flight of stone steps bathe the men, sinuous and magnificent; the women wade down from another, to dip and sink and rise in the brown water, while the ripples break far across the surface in a disorderly spatter of gold under the sunlight. The third pool along the city side lies dark and very tranquil beneath enormous trees that lean far out across its placidity. This is the washing-pool, where the dhobie perpetually plies his comfortable trade, and rows upon rows of garments fringe its shores, hanging in the wind, or lying on rocks to be battered dry with that calculated ferocity of touch which enables a Cinhalese to slam dryness into linen laid on a rock without tearing or damaging a fibre in its fabric (at least, this is their legendary skill; neither I nor my clothes experienced it).

Beyond the Three Pools the road begins to rise slowly, and passes under dense shade towards the blatant yellow walls, ugly and blank, of the local gaol. To the left, embedded in strange tropical growths, lies what once was the Botanical Garden, but now, derelict, is being made into a pleasance for the hotel of Anuradhapura—a very refreshing place, too, were it not huddled so close beneath the high embankment of Tissavewa Lake that it can hope to have but little of a prospect. And still the road goes mounting through the breathless dark tranquillity of the shade, until suddenly a huge red rotundity rises into sight at the summit of the hill, over the topmost walls and ramparts of the gaol. It is Mirisawétiya Dâgaba, now in process of restoration at the hands of a devoted Siamese Prince. So far advanced now is the restoration of the dome, and so imposing is the smooth, clean sweep of its curving walls, that for a long time, until confronted by

document, I earned derision by believing it to be bigger than enormous Ruanwéli. In point of fact, Mirisawétiya Dâgaba is of no remarkable size; though, rising from the top of a hill, very nearly complete in its dome, the globe of red brick has a fine conspicuousness as you see it glowing under the sunset. It was the first foundation of King Duttha Gamini on his triumphant return, and is thus a few years older than Ruanwéli and the Brazen Palace. Legend accounts for its foundation by telling how the King one day ate a certain curry with a certain condiment of chillies, whose two names together made up Mirisweti. Greedily the monarch lapped up all this delicious dish, and omitted to offer any of it to a monk who stood by. After which conscience or indigestion overtook him, and in his penitence he resolved upon a religious foundation, which took the appropriate form of Mirisawétiya Dâgaba. The only drawback to this tale is that the real name of the building is not Mirisawétiya at all, but Maricavatti; and the Mahavansa, preserving the true version of the story, says that Duttha Gamini merely founded it in expiation of a violated vow he had taken to eat nothing without sharing it among the monks. But then comes the second, and quite different, account of its origin. The King one day went down to bathe—presumably in Basawakk'lam Lake, just beyond—and planted in the ground, as he went, his royal sceptre, whose head enshrined a holy relic. When he came up again, and tried to remove it, he could not—neither he nor all his Court. Accordingly he was delighted with the auspicious miracle, and there erected Mirisawétiya Dâgaba. The two stories are clearly unconnected, giving two currents of ecclesiastical tradition. The Abbey of Mirisawétiya has no very prominent place in history. The drum of the dâgaba was in ruins by the beginning of the tenth

century, when Kasyapa the Fifth restored it; and its final restoration, like that of so many other shrines, was accomplished by P'rakram' Bahu the Great. But the red dome is impressive now in the sunset, standing back from the road, in territory all a foaming sea of bristly weeds. The western altar, with its reredos, has been reset, and is remarkably fine, with rich carvings. But of the original Mirisawétiya Dâgaba of the second century B.C. subsequent restorations have in all probability left very little.

The road beyond Mirisawétiya wanders off on a long circuit through the jungle, but the land round the dâgaba has been cleared of its smaller coppice, and for a mile or so one may wander on beneath in the woodland, amid relics countless and unguessable, of preaching-hall, cloister, and other abbey buildings. Thick-set is the soil with squared stone columns still perfect, and blushing in the sunset that darts long shafts upon them through the greenery. For the sun is westering, sailing downwards over the lake, and its rays pierce from the cleared land beyond to the very heart of the thin wood, firing every column and fallen stone with a semblance of warm life. So one wanders on in the silence through the orderly confusion of ruin that gives such a tragic vivid interest to the neighbourhood of Mirisawétiya Dâgaba. Perfect stillness holds the place—a sacred twilight in which only the pillars seem to flush with vitality, enduring there in the wilderness long after all memory is gone of the rich domes and carved roofs that once they supported.

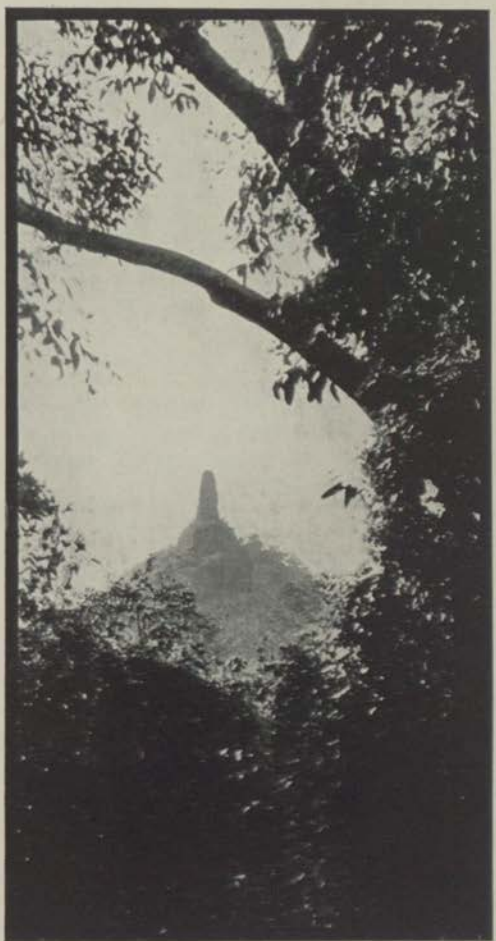
And then, through the tree-trunks and the columns, water gleams far off across a broad clear meadow. It is Basawakk'lam Lake, and our way towards it leads onwards now out of the forest of ruins on to a smooth slope of half a mile, perhaps, over tangled grass and herbage. Here

and there stands up a huge old tree with knotted trunk and wide volume of branches. Far to the right the flame of Spathodeas marks where Anuradhapura now begins, in the first outlying bungalows of the official world. Not very large is Basawakk'lam ; its further shore is a long, low, level line of richly-spreading trees, beyond which stretches away the long, level line of the jungle. To the right the trees sweep towards us, high along the embankment of the lake, over which lies the open park of Thûparâma Dâgaba. The calm expanse of the water is glassy red and gold in the sunset ; one big rounded rock, snowy with bird-droppings, stands up in the middle ; birds and crocodiles make the open lake their pleasance. And then, as one advances towards that placid shore out of the woodland, over the velvety grass, suddenly, very far away, above the level jungle that lies beyond the lake, there appears a new tremendous presence—a mountain in the remote forest, a mountain of forest surmounted by a lofty tapering spire. And this is our first sight of Jétavánarâma Dâgaba.

Despite much warning and reading of it, I had had no notion of Jétavánarâma, and thus I here made acquaintance with it in a manner so startling and dramatic that it stands henceforth in my mind as the most impressive sight of Anuradhapura. And, indeed, this ruined magnificence is the most tremendous relic that the Sacred City possesses. It stands proud in solitude, deep-shrined in the jungle, and yet its presence rules the whole distance, and is sovereign of the landscape ever since Abhayagiriya abdicated that position. Because Abhayagiriya, yet larger than Jétavánarâma, may have been even more imposing in the days when its proportions were perfect : but now, vulgarized, made stodgy and frightful, Abhayagiriya is no longer to be reckoned with. From whatever point you see it, Jétavánarâma

strikes you with fresh force, and, once having seen it, you are always seeing it again in glimpses and flashes of splendour, whether above the tree-tops in the steamy stifling labyrinths of the jungle, or remote and softly purple in the sunlit distances across Basawakk'lam, or frankly terrible in its full majesty as you drive up the long, straight approach that brings you direct to the foot of the dome itself. As you draw nearer, Jétavánarâma seems to swallow the sky, looming over you until it fills the world.

It is a long, far cry to Jétavánarâma. Three miles of hot red road lie between Devanampiyatissa's Dâgaba and Maha Séna's. The road diverges under Thûparâma; one branch returns by the tomb of Sanghamitta the Nun and the eastern altar of Ruanwéli, to the Brazen Palace, the Bo-Tree, and the bazaar; the other runs unwavering away into the forest towards Jétavánarâma and all the myriad ruins that lie about the base of Jétavánarâma, stretching through unexplored mile after mile of jungle in all directions. At first you go dully down an ordinary avenue of trees, past rice-fields and plantations of palm; but then the dâgaba leaps into view, miles distant yet, but dominant over the tree-tops, and all your way is cheered and ruled by its presence. Perfectly proportioned to the mountainous dome is the mouldering square of the tee; perfectly proportioned to both, filled with an almost divine exquisiteness of aspiration, is the high, slender spire that goes soaring so magnificently heavenwards. The whole dome, of course, is a waving forest of tall trees, rising like some strange sudden hill from the vast pavement at the base. Spire and tee are stripped now of all ornament or covering—mere red brick they are, powdered and crumbling. The tee is urgently in need of underpinning too, or else in a year or so the whole thing will



JÉTAVÁNARÂMA DÂGABA.

come down, and Jétavánarâma be numbered with the lost beauties of the world. The road continues straight up an avenue of ruined shrines and pilgrim-houses to the southern portico of the Dâgaba. Here bare pillars lean and topple; a flight of broken, weed-grown steps leads on to the platform and the four altars, makeshift and lost in greenery, that mark the four cardinal points at the dâgaba's base. Less hitherto has been done here than at the other august shrines, and therefore the desolation is proportionately more impressive. The sweltering silence of the jungle, broken only by a rare bird-call, seems attentive on the majesty of this vast abandoned dome; and the spire hangs poised above the world in the stillness, pointing a way upwards through peace to the perfect peace eternal. Thick growth of thorn and weed and coppice encumbers all the platform; thorns fill the moat and hide the fragments fallen from the dâgaba. Here, perhaps, lost in the fragrant tangle, lies tilted a huge altar-stone or round table of offering: perhaps it is a pillar tumbled amid the green: at one point, cracked in several places, tragic and splendid, lies on the pavement by the northern altar the octagonal monolith that once made the finial of the spire.

Not altogether abandoned, though, stands Jétaváná-râma. Where once the crowded abbey served as the shrine where monks and Bishops officiated in their tens of thousands, an occasional taper now glimmers from a tottering altar, half buried in the coppice, a votive banner hovers from some bush. Some solitary Yellow-robe goes to and fro in the blazing heat of the sun-flogged platform, venerating and tending as best he can the scanty ruins of the holy place. Lost all around in the pathless forest are the luxuries of worship—the swimming baths, the kitchens, the many pomps and splendours that corrupted the purity

of monastic meditation and beneficence. Only remains unaltered the spirit of worship, the same now as ever, though one alone may carry the sacred torch where once a million. And in all its magnificent decay Jétavánarâma has lost nothing of its power and prestige. Far down at the heart of that tremendous dome there may yet lie a portion of the girdle once worn in His last earthly life by the Incarnate Truth that was called Gautama Buddha. Deserted in the jungle, guarded by the abysmal forest, the shrine still keeps its treasure—holier, therefore, if possible, to one's heart, than when it was ringed in with the gold and pomp of human tendance and ecclesiastical guardianship. And so holy is this place to-day, that when all other means have failed in the criminal courts, the accused is brought here under guard to the altar of Jétavánarâma, and there makes his oath upon the supreme sanctity of the Dâgaba and its Relic. Other oaths, any or all, may be frail and violable, but the oath taken on Jétavánarâma is the most solemn word a man can utter, never to be denied nor dishonoured.

Yet Jétavánarâma Dâgaba comes very late upon the scene. It was founded by Maha Séna, the heretic, about 290 A.C., after his reconciliation with the Church. Even so, as we have seen, there was trouble, and he endeavoured to usurp property of Maha Vihara for the endowment of his new foundation ; and his reluctant acquiescence in the degradation of his own Abbot must be taken as marking his final reconciliation with the Church. But Jétavánaráma seems, according to the Mahavansa, to have strayed persistently after false scriptures long after the heretic King had passed to his destiny. We have seen what trouble had P'rakram' Bahu the Great to assuage the schism of the Church, and how, when he came to deal with Jétavánarâma, so corrupted and worthless were the

brethren, without exception, that he had no choice but to degrade them all and break up their foundation. Yet, despite these evil ways, the supreme holiness, and probably the solid authenticity of the Relic, ensured the sanctity of the Dâgaba through ages of desolation down to our own day. At least, it is hard otherwise to imagine why such tremendous veneration still attaches to the shrine of an abbey that has always borne an unsavoury reputation for heresy—a veneration so much in excess of that accorded even to buildings of earliest date, such as Abhayagiriya and Mirisawétiya—buildings whose Relics, though abundant, are always left unspecified, and therefore were probably not very interesting or well attested.

Time and typewriters and energies would fail to tell of the innumerable ruins that lie round Jétavánarâma. In fact, all the jungle now for mile upon mile is nothing but one continuous ruin—unexplored, dimly divined, unending—abbey after abbey, baths, preaching-halls, refectories, ordination-halls, nunneries, monasteries, cloisters, pilgrim-houses, greater and lesser religious buildings of every description, with never a secular one amid the lot. If you will, you may plunge into the forest due north of Jétavánarâma, and follow a little track that leads you on and on in the fastnesses of the impenetrable jungle, past ruin after ruin, to the Abbey of Vijayarama, very far away in a clearing of the forest. Interminable is the distance, overpowering the delicious scented heat, close and awful the unbroken density of the coppice. Here and there are clearings filled with stone phantoms of old foundations, or through the dark twilight of the trees glimmer to right and left the protruding grey bones of some old hall or almshouse. Then comes a long, long tract of forest containing nothing, after which you see far ahead of you down a slope the ruins of Vijayarama, scattered over a

tract of grassy lawn amid the tree-trunks. Orderly and easily to be discerned is Vijayarama's magnificent audience-hall, with basement carved in rich bosses of ornament, dâgaba in the centre, monastic buildings all round. Thence one may penetrate on for further miles to dull Kiribat Véhéra, or, through the thick wilderness, past Pankuliya, with its nunnery and its seated Buddhas, to the tiny priory of Mullegalla, perfect in its outlines amid the ferny growths that spray their verdure over all its stones; its little cloister, its little dâgaba, its complete miniature of such enormous foundations as Maha Vihara or Jétavánarâma.

So one returns, ignoring the big uninteresting Abbey of Puliyankulam, away beyond Mullegalla, by the highway side, to the roads that diverge at the base of Jétavánarâma. Ruins, ruins, ruins—one grows sickened and sad with ruins glimmering everywhere to right and left through the greenery as one goes. Once it was all so rich and splendid; now it is all so poor and naked. Vast swimming-baths one passes, richly carved, with stairways leading down—the godly relaxation of the religious; guard-stones to forgotten cloisters, where the serpent-kings keep ward over weeds and emptiness; moonstones lavishly ornamented, to dwarf-held stairways leading into the wilderness; huge elephant-trough alms-canoes of stone, filled henceforth with rubble and fallen leaves. By the highway-side Our Lord Buddha, stripped of all His riches, sits throned, gigantic in meditation, unconscious eternally that any disgrace or abandonment has befallen Him, since for all eternity He stands beyond reach of change; or small dark images, blurred and indecipherable, lie lost in the leafage of fern and bramble in dim twilit glades of the forest. Further and further, as the eye grows able to penetrate the green obscurity, stretches the

perspective of pillar and boulder, receding indefinitely into the dappled gloom of the trees, with whose trunks their greys imperceptibly blend in the uttermost distance of the quiet darkness. There is no end to the mournfulness of it—the resigned desolation that has passed beyond protest into peace. In forgotten hollows of the woodland lie vast slabs, written over from end to end with edicts of forgotten Kings for the reformation of monastic orders long since fled from their fallen abbeys. Huge trilithic porticoes lean and threaten to collapse amid the tree-boles, leading onwards from thicket of thorn to further thicket of thorn, in which is seen no sign of the holy places to which once they gave entrance. In one cleared glade, a brimming bowl of sunlight, there rises, on four exquisite slender columns, a perfect roof of stone, daintily corniced with carving, and wrought with rich heavy ornament upon each pediment. To whatever purpose this may have served, it now, skilfully replaced, remains a monument of ancient beauty ; and behind the hand of the Cinhalese who carved it and set it up there shows very clearly the mind of the Greek whose art inspired the design.

And so the road winds round, under the northern face of Jétavánarâma, to make a further bend through the forest, and so back to the road that leads into the Sacred City, from which at a given point diverges the avenue that carries one straight—alarmingly straight—to the southern porch of the great Dâgaba, looming every moment more gigantic as it swells before your approaching eyes. The longer road still leads through an intricate welter of ruins, past entrances to vanished cloisters and stony hints of abbey buildings long merged in earth. At one point we skirt a huge empty lake, banked up with stonework—an exaggerated swimming pool, so large as almost to be a lake rather than a tank. This the Cinhalese

have called the Elephant Pool—not because anybody ever supposed that it had anything to do with elephants, but because on principle the Cinhalese express their sense of size by using the word "elephant." Thus a superexcellent saint or a superevil villain would be called an "elephant saint" or an "elephant villain." So this pond is called the Elephant Pôkŭna, which could more adequately, then, be translated simply as the Giants' Pool. Of course, it is empty now; but it must have served to much use when its enclosing walls, some thirty feet deep, were all abrim with water. Perhaps—rash thought—there may have been a settlement here of ordinary lay people, and this was their bathing-place; but one dare not ponder on this, so utterly, as far as we can see, was the whole enormous extent of Anuradhapura made over to the religious. Of the countless buildings found there is only, I believe, one which is said not to belong to some ecclesiastical purpose. Even this is very uncertain, and still more uncertain is the building's provisionary description as a royal palace.

Over the tallest tree-tops now and then soars the spire of Jétavánarâma Mountain as we go. No other name will suit that miracle of mounded brick which is the afforested dâgaba. Then a turn of the road brings us unexpectedly round upon lovely little "Lankarama" Dâgaba. The very name of this has perished, and "Lankarama" is simply an unauthorized epithet for the convenience of the present day. Harischandra declares that this is the work of Maha Séna's Queen. In any case it is a small, beautiful building, very much on the model of Thûparâma, though rather less, I fancy, in size. The pillars here, with their heavy carved capitals that stand round the shrine (as at Thûparâma), are monolithic, hewn all in one piece. But their work is not so delicate or fine as that of the older building. "Lankarama," though, is in far worse repair

than Thûparâma; the pillars are smashed and tottering, the dâgaba itself a mere cloven ruin, filled with weeds and brushwood. A few years ago a Siamese monk went into retreat here, and the assembling crowds under his inspiration developed into a committee for the restoration of the holy place. Unfortunately a Government official came on the scene, and with rather unnecessary brutality quelled the whole scheme. So we find "Lankarama" a ruin, and so leave it in the sunset, driving slowly back into the Sacred City, while the spire of Jétavánarâma moves away over the trees behind us.

CHAPTER XVII

AN ABBEY AND A HERMITAGE

FOLLOWING the road southwards from the precinct of the Holy Tree, one passes by the bazaar and along a fringe of native houses; then, on the right, appears a mound all covered with trees. The place is melancholy, shapeless, ruined, obliterated, with a deep red scar in its face, showing where scientific hands have vainly dug into its depths to find treasures, and, having found nothing, then abandoned the mound in contempt. And the forlorn sight is yet sadder when one calls up the past. For this nameless lump was once some very sacred dâgaba, now all jumbled into a mere hummock of soil, but once resplendent with glaze and colour and riches of every sort. They identify it, too, with a building of the third century B.C., but there is no trace of any authoritative name; all memory of the thûpa's real history has perished, and the populace gives the ruined dome a name that is clearly false. For Elala the Cholyan was killed, cremated, and buried by the Southern Gate of the royal city, and the Southern Gate must have lain a very great deal further south than this mound, hardly a stone's throw from the Holy Tree itself, the heart of the Sacred City; and therefore the tomb of Elala this can never have been.

In the century after the reign of King Devanampiyatissa, Ceylon had a foretaste of its later troubles, of its ultimate ruin. First came over from India two Tamil youths, who

killed the reigning monarch, and reigned righteously, says the Mahavansa, in his place—which means that they were favourable to the Church and respected the shrines. After they had ruled for two-and-twenty years, they were displaced and killed by Mutasiva, the last of Devanampiyatissa's nine brothers, who was King for ten years, then was in his turn dethroned and put to death by an invader from the Cholya country in India, a Prince of upright conduct, named Elala, a Tamil. Tradition and chronicle alike are extraordinarily fond of this foreign invader, who destroyed the native sovereignty, almost extinguished the sacred race of Devanampiyatissa, and held the land for nearly half a century in a firm alien domination. But Elala, on all accounts, seems to have been a conqueror of rare wisdom and goodness ; far down the centuries to this day continue the legends of his justice, generosity, and skill. Though, like P'rakram' Bahu, he never renounced his heathen faith, he always showed himself very favourable to the Church, and thus, of course, bought the friendship of the chronicles. But no patronage of the Church could have secured for Elala the love and consideration accorded him in the popular mind. Even in our own time, now that he has been dead two thousand years, he is still a living figure in the Cinhalese imagination ; and misfortunes, oppressions, accidents, are greeted by the populace of to-day with sighings for the days of good King Elala. Nor, it may be imagined, has legend neglected so fair an opportunity.

At his bed's head hung a bell, they say, with a long, long rope, and all the wronged in all the land used to go and ring the King's bell for redress. Once, when he went out on procession, his chariot-wheel decapitated a calf that lay on the highway. "Wild with anger," straight goes mother-cow to the King's bell and rings it furiously.

Accordingly, with that very wheel did King Elala strike off the head of his own son. Narrowly, and not by any will of his own, did the King escape the same fate himself. And the story offers us a reason for the Church's affection for his memory, for, returning one day from Mihintalé, the yoke-bar of his chariot (he seems to have had a careless driver) knocked fifteen stones out of a dâgaba. Forth run the monks. "Lord, you have destroyed our dâgaba." Accidental as the act had been, the King alights, prostrates himself in the road, and begs the offended brethren, in repayment, to strike off his head with the chariot-wheel. "Our Divine Master," they replied, "delights not in pain and death; make atonement by restoring our dâgaba" — which Elala did, with the utmost magnificence. No wonder the Church is kind to so submissive a ruler, even though he was not her son.

Even the supernatural was not beyond his influence. One day an old woman laid out some paddy-rice to dry, whereupon, quite unseasonably, a shower fell and wetted all her paddy-rice. She was greatly vexed by this, picked up her paddy-rice, and went off to ring the bell and scold the King for allowing such unseasonable things to happen. And the King, becoming convinced that this shower really *was* unseasonable, meditated the matter, and concluded that if a monarch rules well, all should go correspondingly well with his people. Therefore this mishap must arrive through some fault of his. King Elala humbled himself and did penance. The tutelar gods, touched by the spectacle of his piety, went and told Sakra, Lord of Lords; who sent for the Cloud-Spirit, and forbade such unseasonable happenings in the future, ordaining that rain should only fall at the proper times—so efficacious was the just soul of the King.

Very interesting are always these fragments of old

theistic faiths that survive in Buddhist legend; but even more interesting is the Mahavansa's comment on the King—very different from that which a Christian monk would have passed on any heathen, no matter how beneficent. "Thus," says the "Mahavansa, even he who had not discarded his false creed, having perfectly freed himself from the four sinful sources of injustice—lust, hate, ignorance, and fear—attained to this exalted extent of supernatural power. In these circumstances, how much more should a wise man and true believer exert himself to eschew the errors that lead men to commit iniquity?"

Elala ruled righteously for four-and-forty years, "administering justice impartially to friends and foes." Meanwhile, however, a branch of the dethroned royal line of Ceylon had fled away to Rohuna, the city of refuge in the South, which, throughout Cinhalese history, is always appearing as the last stronghold of legitimacy or the first citadel of revolt. The King and his Queen ruled happily in Rohuna, while Elala held the throne of Anuradhapura; and their lives were only saddened by childlessness. At last the Queen, a very excellent woman, found a certain saintly monk at the point of death, and prevailed upon him after much prayer to seek rebirth in her womb. And so the Queen set out on her homeward journey, and the monk gave up the ghost. Instantly the Queen felt what was happening, stopped her carriage, and was conscious of conception. She hurried on to tell the King, and together they returned and made rich provision for the monastery in which the holy man had left his corpse. And so, in due time, was born Prince Gamini Ábhăya, distinguished from birth with every omen of a happy and prosperous life. Not long after the Queen bore another son, named Tissa. And from their very birth the royal babies were reared in the utmost devotion to the Faith. The King gave rice-milk

to five hundred monks, and after that collected a morsel left on each plate into a golden dish. Then he administered this to the children, begging that if ever they should turn against the Holy Way to tread other paths, that rice might never be digested in their stomachs. "And the children, fully understanding the imprecation, swallowed the rice-milk as if it had been heavenly food," and no less easily digested it.

The King chose his test prudently—or was it the Queen? What would have happened if he had tried the babies with toasted cheese or sausage? Why, a miracle, of course! When the Princes were eleven and twelve respectively, the King gave them yet another trial. He divided their dinner into three portions, and over the first he made them swear that they would always love each other and live in unity. This they did gladly, and accordingly ate their portions without scruple. "Eat the second," then said the King, "swearing you will never make war upon the Tamils." But neither boy would accept this poor-spirited promise. They both threw away their rice indignantly, and Gamini went out and lay down on his bed with his hands and feet doubled up beneath him. In a little while the Queen, his mother, followed him to his room and began to fondle him. "Why do you not lie comfortably at your length?" she inquired. "On one side of me are the Tamils," he answered hotly, "holding all the land beyond Máhawéliganga, and on the other there is the great sea. Squeezed and imprisoned thus, how should a future King of Lanka lie out at his length?" The King and Queen were struck speechless with amazement. So Gamini grew on to his sixteenth year, grudging ever more and more the alien rule of Elala the Tamil in the royal and sacred city of Anuradhapura.

Meanwhile, too, disaffection was gradually spreading in

the North, or the Cinhalese were awakening to the fact that the Tamils were but a handful of foreigners, maintaining themselves artificially amid a far larger native population. All thoughts turned to the banished dynasty and to the rightful sovereign far away at Rohuna. Opposition to Elala grew and consolidated from village to village. Prince Gamini, of the ancient royal house, became the obvious centre of the approaching revolt. The Prince held a review of the army, and then begged his father to allow him to invade the North, and march against the Tamil usurper. But the King, who was either a very excellent person or a very chicken-hearted one, replied that he was quite satisfied with his sovereignty of the island south of Máhawéliganga River, and entirely forbade his son's expedition, for his son's safety's sake. Three times the entreaty came to him, and always he answered: "This bank of the river is enough." So at last Gamini lost patience—a strange development for one who was the soul of a sainted monk—and sent his father a woman's golden bracelet, with a message: "My father can be no man, or he would not say such things: so let him wear this." The King, in turn, grew angry, and threatened to bind his son in a golden chain that he had made. Whereupon Gamini fled to Kota in Malaya, and from that day, on account of his undutiful behaviour, he was known as Duttha Gamini—Gamini the Undutiful.

Not long after this the weak King died, and a quarrel at once broke out over the sovereignty between the two brothers who had sworn eternal friendship; and it is evident that the Church fomented the quarrel instead of allaying it, as duty and religion bade. However, Tissa, who was clearly the Church's candidate for the throne, was soon worsted by Duttha Gamini, and fled for hiding to a monastery, where he crept under a monk's bed.

But King Duttha Gamini traced his footsteps to the monastery door, called out the monk, and asked him, "Where is Tissa?" "Lord, he is not on my bed," replied the undiplomatic monk, although he had the best will in the world to shelter the Church's pet, and had already laid his cloak over the bed to hide the fugitive. Whereupon the King, of course, instantly knew he was under the bed, and had a guard set over the whole monastery until the rebel was surrendered. Ultimately Tissa was carried out by the monks on a covered bier, like a corpse, and the King, respecting his holy defenders, contemptuously let the coward go. Meanwhile the Queen-Dowager was being conveyed in high state to Mahagama; so the King repaired thither to her side. But Tissa soon grew weary of sedition after his humiliating escapes, and begged a certain influential Abbot to make his peace; and the Abbot took him to Court in the disguise of a novice.

The King and the Queen-Mother received the Abbot respectfully, seated him at the royal table, and plied him with food, but the Abbot covered his plate with his robe and would not eat; so the King, astonished, asked the reason. "I have brought with me Tissa, your brother," replied the Abbot. "Where is that traitor?" cried Duttha Gamini, starting from his place, and drawing his sword. But the Queen-Dowager caught him in her arms and would not let him go, and the King turned angrily upon the Abbot. "All this sedition is *your* doing," he cried. "You know how submissive we are to the Church. If you had sent even the merest novice of seven years old to intervene, none of this strife would have come about, none of my peoples' lives been wasted in battle. All the fault lies with the Brethren." So the Abbot bowed his head and owned that this was true, and promised that the Church should do penance and make

atonement. Then the King was pacified by this unusual humility, and called for his brother, and was fully reconciled to him there at table before the Queen-Dowager, that good woman, and all the monks. Here evidently was a monarch strong enough to subdue even the Church.

And thus at last everything was ready for the great adventure, and Duttha Gamini went up at the head of his army to drive the Tamils out of Anuradhapura. The tale of the invasion reads like a book of the Iliad, so high and heroic is the strain. Fiercely raged battle after battle, until at last Duttha Gamini reached the Southern Gate of the Sacred City, and there the final conflict took place, and the two Kings stood face to face. Duttha Gamini had given orders that no hand but his was to be against Elala the Tamil; so there, outside the Southern Gate of Anuradhapura, the javelin of Duttha Gamini closed the righteous reign of Elala, and all Lanka came once more under the sway of the ancient royal house. The conqueror's first labour, though, in true Homeric spirit, was to do last honour to his enemy. There before the Southern Gate the corpse of the just King was cremated, and a regal mound set up, and honours ordered to be paid it all down the ages, as one pays honour to the mightiest of conquerors. And through every age of Cinhalese history, each King in turn has observed the rule, and silenced his band of music, and alighted from his litter to go on foot past the supposed grave of Elala. Even in the last generation, when the kingdom was dying, and the Prince fled, broken, hopeless, and exhausted, from the Sacred City, he yet remembered the law, stayed his flight, and walked footsore through the silent darkness past the grave of Elala.

Meanwhile, after a few sporadic risings, Duttha Gamini became unquestioned Sovereign. But he remembered all

the thousands of brave men who had died in his quarrel, and his heart could find no peace. On this, it is said, there came to him miraculously through the air various holy monks to bring him comfort; but I think that if they ever came, and if they were genuine Churchmen, they must have been very worldly prelates, and not holy at all, for their consolation was most repulsive, and so utterly opposed to the Buddhist spirit that it might well have been used by Torquemada to appease a momentary qualm—if ever she had so human a weakness—in the heart of that truly hateful woman, Isabel the Catholic. For it amounted to this: that all the dead (except two) were sinners and heretics, on a par with beasts, and therefore not worth troubling one's soul about. Now this medieval notion can never have proceeded from any real Buddhist monk. In the first place, what Buddhist would ever say—could ever dare to say—that a beast's life is not to be considered? In the second, on the face of it, the argument is clearly untrue, for Duttha Gamini's army was undoubtedly composed of orthodox and excellent followers of the Way, many of whom, too, were no doubt, for one reason or another, to be found also in the army of Elala; so that one greatly suspects this story—monstrous, fallacious, and entirely exceptional. However, whether these consolers were real monks or mere frauds devised by the Ministers to encourage the King, the Mahavansa says that they had their effect, and that the King was restored to peace. They advised him, in effect, not to trouble any more about the past, but to devote himself to the glory of religion—a typically ecclesiastical piece of advice which is the one convincing detail of the story.

Whereupon the King's conscience took a new turn, and he remembered how his parents in his childhood had

administered to him an oath (they seem to have been strangely fond of doing this—such a very unfair trick to play on a child) that he would never eat of any dish without sharing it with the monks. "Have I, or have I not, ever done such a thing in violation of my oath?" pondered the King. And then—horrid thought—he recalled how that he had once eaten a chilly all by himself, without offering anyone else so much as a bite. He had only done it in absence of mind, it is true, one day at breakfast; but, none the less, the perjury called for penance. And thence grew that mighty building, which became Mirisawétiya Dâgaba and Vihara, to be followed by all the other gorgeous foundations of Duttha Gamini, until at last, as I have told, his dying eyes closed in contemplation of uncompleted Ruanwéli. The Mahavansa, one gathers, is not, after all, perfectly happy about the traditional consolation with which those very suspicious saints appeased the King's qualms, and has to add: "A good man should bear in mind the innumerable myriads of human lives wasted for the sake of personal ambition and its other countless attendant evils. And also he should steadily keep in mind the instability of all such things, that he may obtain the happiness eternal. So before long he will obtain release from sorrow, or a happy departure."

Leaving the so-called Tomb of Elala to the right, the high-road of Kurunegala (which you must call "Corney Gall," if you want to be in the movement) leads onwards through very pleasant places, under vast trees with houses on either side, and children playing on their thresholds in the shade of the ample branches overhead. After this there comes a broad stretch of paddy-land, only cleared from jungle in the last generation, but rich and emerald and prosperous as ever in the royal days of the city. For a

mile or more in the brilliant sunshine goes our way, until on our left there rises in a high coppice a long outcrop of round dark cliffs and boulders. This is the rock-monastery of Vessagiriya, the oldest rock foundation of the island. Everywhere the bluffs have been hollowed, scooped, and carved into little caves and cells, each for its meditating monk. Of the simplest, roughest work are these excavations, and over the lintel of each chamber, each mere recess or gnawed corner of some vast overhanging boulder, there runs in faint scratches, that yet are fresh as yesterday's work, a dedicatory inscription in the oldest and most primitive monosyllabic writing in Ceylon, dating from the second century B.C.

Up and down the cliffs one climbs amid the tree-trunks, in and out of the cavities. Strangely simple and impressive are these little dens, tranquil hollows of cool darkness while the sun is beating hotly on the rocks above. Each cell is simply a cavity, with one smoothed length for a bed; and there must have been many tenants of this holy hive, for one may wander in and out among the boulders for many an hour without exhausting the number of the cells. Out across the world they could look, these monks, from their meditation; across a pleasant world, much as it is to-day, no doubt, of rice-field and palm-grove and garden, stretching away over the level distance, with here and there a gleaming spire to show where some shrine lurked hidden amid the verdure. Far down at the foot of the slope lie ruins of the baths and buildings that were added to the original monastery by later monarchs in Cinhalese history; but one may be sure that the learned and holy ones of Devanampiyatissa's time required no such adjunct, but sat content at their studies and strivings, there amid the naked rocks, protected only from the rains, but with no other luxury to contaminate

their pure aspirations. In fact, as one wanders up and down the stone-cut stairways of Vessagiriya, in and out the darkness of shrine or cell, this is the deep charm of the lonely, quiet place. It can never have been the seat of any rich or worldly brotherhood. No wealthy abbot can ever have striven in luxury or property here, with some wealthier abbot across the way. Here there is only bare simplicity; and only those who loved bare simplicity, and sought it, can ever have come to Vessagiriya at any stage of the foundation's existence. Away in the distance one may see from certain points the wooded dome and the spire of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba; and that reminder of the huge city, with all its lavish display of sacred luxury and pomp, adds force and value to one's impression of nude, austere Vessagiriya, where none would ever come but those of pure and simple thought, determined to cut loose from the ensnaring delusions of comfort, high-fringed beds, and King's bounties in golden dishes, to seek the Great Peace, where alone it can be found in perfect self-possession and self-mastery, undistracted by the irrelevant transiencies of the world.

Utterly silent now lies empty Vessagiriya; but not more silent must it have been in the bygone times when every cell was tenanted by some soul intent on highest aspiration and holiness. One feels even to-day that that aspiration haunts the stillness no less now than then; for though men may crumble, and Empires go to undecipherable ruin, aspiration, holy thought, kind wish, can never change nor perish, being part of the eternal, but hover for ever about the sphere of their activity, blessing the world insensibly long after their thinker has gone on to other activities, and their own purpose entirely shifted and changed with the enormous revolution of the years. All these kind and sacred things that once were thought

at Vessagiriya are still active, then, in the happy world around us, and one wanders buoyantly up and down amid the cells, feeling at every step the influence of a vanished but very present holiness—a happiness complete and unsurpassable, that once animated the silent devotees of every hollow in the rock.

Returning from Vessagiriya along the road, one has to drive up a little rough by-road to that most charming of all spots in Anuradhapura—the very aged little Abbey of Issurumuniya. We must have sighted it on our outward way, gleaming amid its inky-black cliffs; but I was cunning, and said no word about it, reserving the visit for our return. Close under the high embankment of Tissavewa Water lies Issurumuniya, the abbey buildings all leaned and piled and poised and squeezed amid a jostle of immense smooth black boulders, outcrop of the same formation that you find at Vessagiriya. Before the buildings lies a long, rectangular piece of ground, enclosed on either side by an L-shaped moat or tank of gleaming water, whose further shores are deep-fringed with reeds, their waving forest hiding the lower roofs of the abbey from view. But as one follows up the road one arrives at last before the very shrine itself. Beneath the towering black cliffs lies a lovely little green clear pool; on the cliff itself are carved elephants, and sprouts of brilliant crimson blossom. Beyond, in the perspective, rises the white and gold of the shrine, with its stairways, the abbey buildings, the additions that are now making to the cloister; and then, poised on the highest peak of the rock, the snowy dome of the dâgaba. And all the cloister is bedded in the waving grace of tall old cocoa palms.

Very august and ancient is the Abbey of Issurumuniya, in all probability making one of the Eight Sacred Places. Here it was that Mahinda the Apostle had at one time

his retreat, and here retired under his auspices five hundred illustrious devotees, who took the vows and founded the abbey in Devanampiyatissa's far-off days. In those godly ages the foundation grew ever richer and richer; the abbey lands stretched far and wide; the abbey buildings occupied twice the shrunken space they barely fill to-day. Kasyapa the Parricide notably endowed it, and made it richer than ever before. And then, in the ruin of the Northern Kingdom, ruin descended on Issurumuniya—ruin blank, silent, and unbroken to our own time. At last, about forty years since, the monk Sangharakhitta discovered the pitiful relics lost in the thorny forest. Alone and unaided he cleared the jungle; by his own energy he rebuilt the shrine, the cloister, the dâgaba; and now he is Abbot of a thriving, growing foundation, to which new buildings have for ever to be added. A simple holy soul is the Abbot of Issurumuniya; even the resident English accord him that credit alone among his peers. Of course they call him a "high priest," and say that now he dotes; but none denies that he worthily upholds the traditions of the quiet place. If the establishment wishes to do you honour, you will be met by the Abbot in person, a stately old figure in his yellow robes, leaning on his splendid pastoral staff, knobbed with ivory so ancient that it glows soft as gold. Chatting pleasantly, he will lead you from place to place, tell you the traditions, and show you all the sanctities that he rediscovered, all the ruins that he himself made sound and whole again after their centuries of loneliness and abandonment.

And a very blessed corner of the world is placid, beautiful little Issurumuniya, nestling amid those vast dark rocks at the foot of the high embankment. "A den of bears it was," says the Abbot, when first he settled here; now

clean white buildings gleam everywhere against the darkness of the rock, and the dâgaba, perched high on its pinnacle, shines dazzling in the sunlight amid the waving branches of the tall palms. Piercing through the copse at the back of the cloister, one comes out upon a marshy pool, encircled by palm and choked with weeds. Here stand boldly up the huge glaucous goblets of the lotus-leaves, rolling their pearls as the dewdrop at their heart rolls to and fro. Their flowers still linger far down in the mud, where the cunning old crocodiles hide unsuspected at their roots. So let none plunge heedlessly into that innocent pond to pick the splendour of the lotus-blossoms when they appear. In the tiny square pool, though, to the left of the shrine at the foot of the cliff, lurk no such evil influences, but myriads of little silver fish, which you may gain joy by feeding. Across the green surface they come in a shivering rush, and the white reflections of the dâgaba shatter and break into a thousand dancing fragments.

The Abbot has introduced decency and order into his foundation ; before the rocks there lies a smooth space of sand, so neat that one almost dreads to walk on it, and all the buildings are distinguished for their clean simplicity. Though the Buddhas of the shrine are very ancient, their paint and decoration is new, and all the work of the present Abbot, who has even incurred trouble for himself by the smiling appearance of prosperity that he has brought back to desolate Issurumuniya. For only the other day there came a large band of pilgrims to view the shrines ; and, having paid their respects to each holy spot and made their due devotions, they sat them down to eat in the cloister. They had, of course, brought their food with them, and when they had made themselves some tea for refreshment, they offered, as is proper, a

due share to the monks who had so kindly entertained them. Abbot and monks partook of that tea in all innocence. Shortly afterwards monks and Abbot were all taken ill: and soon, through fits and delirium, lay prone and unconscious about the steps and pavements of the shrine. Those devout pilgrims had poisoned their hosts with henbane in the hope of making clear off with the abbey treasure while the monks were yet comatose and helpless. Fortunately, however, their plan failed, and their wickedness was duly punished.

Clean and simple though the shrines may be, they are not, of course, beautiful, nor show any signs of taste for the beautiful. But this is the universal rule to-day in Ceylon, no matter how things may have been in the days of King Devanampiyatissa. Gaudiness and crudity of colour, barbarity of design, prehistoric immaturity of workmanship, distinguish modern crafts in Ceylon. At one point there is a little hollow in the rock, for which they are now setting up a big square building. A reclining figure lies at the end, in the cavity, representing Mahinda the Apostle; and all around stand innumerable little brilliant figurines of saints, angels, and guardian demons. Then, on the right, are two life-sized statues carved in wood, incredibly primitive: the one by way of being human, hawk-beaked, round-eyed, staring outwards with a fixed, bland ferocity. He is scantily roped in emerald and gold. His neighbour is livid and awful, of a bule-black, like a devil animating the body of a week-old corpse. This, on inquiry of the Abbot, is found to be a "Brahman," and the other is "Vessántăra Raja." Suddenly we realize that we are looking on the actors in the most famous of all the birth-stories of Gautama Buddha.

This is the legend, or, rather, the parable (for all these myths aim at inculcating some virtue by a supreme and

even exaggerated example of it) : Vessántăra Raja was the eldest son of an Indian King, and a man of extreme piety, so profuse in charity that he gave away all he had. And, of course, that holy soul of his was to be, after one more earthly manifestation, the flawless Wisdom of Our Lord Buddha. Even in that penultimate birth we may think of Vessántăra as Bodhisatta, growing in utter unselfishness ever closer to the great perfection. None that came to him was sent away empty ; and one day there came to him some Brahmans who actually asked him to give them even his state elephant in charity. Now this was, in point of fact, the device of an envious neighbour King, who hoped either to discredit Vessántăra by forcing him to refusal, or to ruin him by tempting him to grant so monstrous a request. All this Bodhisatta naturally understood ; but he also understood that not the utmost jealousy of the unrighteous, nor any consideration of political expediency, can ever justify a man in denying what is asked, and showing selfishness. Accordingly, he dismounted at once from the sacred elephant of state, and made it over to the Brahmans. "But the populace," says the "Jatákamâla," "were adherents of political wisdom," and were accordingly stricken with consternation at so humiliating a submission. And they went in a vast deputation to the King, reproached him for his neglect of matters public, and urged him to restrain his son. "The King did not feel very kindly disposed towards them," when they complained of Vessántăra ; however, he told them they were right. "I know," he said, "that Vessántăra indulges in his disproportionate passion for charity so as to neglect the rules of political wisdom. And this is unsuitable for one appointed to the responsibilities of royalty. But I will put a limit to his actions." "That will not do," replied the subjects. "Vessántăra

is not a person to be restrained by a mere warning or reproof." "What more can I do?" answered the King; "he hates sin, but his attachment for virtue is turning almost into a craze. Do you want me to kill or imprison my son because of that elephant?"

This horrified the deputation. "Not at all," they replied. "By no means. Flogging or imprisonment for your son would please none of us. Only Vessántăra, because of his tenderness and compassion of heart, because of his devotion to piety, is not fitted for the troublesome burden of royalty. We need politic and martial men for Kings. Your son, who in his love of righteousness does not care about policy, is a proper person to dwell in a penance-grove. Remember, if Princes neglect political expediency, it is their peoples that pay for it." The King could not stand against this, bitter as were his grief and shame. He consented at last to the banishment of Vessántăra, and sent a chamberlain to break the news to the Prince. Vessántăra heard, in astonishment too deep for words, that, as the chamberlain said, "the people were offended at his exceeding loftiness of mind." So he prepared for exile, and bade Madri, his wife, to do good without ceasing, and not to mourn for his absence. "But the Princess suppressed all emotion that might shake her husband's self-control," and answered that where he went, there would she also go with their children, and that, far from dreading a wild forest-life, they would all find it happy and peaceful beyond any life in a palace. So Vessántăra gave away all his wealth, and the heroic couple with their two children wandered far away into the forest, there to dwell in a hut of leaves and subsist on berries. And there one day, while Madri was away hunting for berries and fruits, the trial of Bodhisatta grew fiercer, for another insatiate Brahman came to him and

asked him for his two children as slaves. Even Vessántăra shrank from the sacrifice, and the Brahman reproached him for the incompleteness of his charity. So then Vessántăra understood the matter aright, and gave up his children. The Brahman began to drag them brutally away into slavery, while the poor little creatures wailed farewell to their absent mother, leaving her their wooden elephants and other toys to console her, while their father sat by in agony. But meanwhile, away in the forest, the mother's heart of Madri was mysteriously aware of her loss, and she hurried home to find the children gone and her husband sitting in a stupor of despair, remembering the wicked heartlessness of that Brahman. So suddenly she understood all, and swooned with grief. Then Vessántăra caught her in his arms, and consoled her, and showed her the full duty and glory of sacrifice, describing the old poor Brahman and his greater need of young helping arms. And she, weak soul of woman, grew strong at last, and understood, and her sorrow passed away, as heaven and earth burst miraculously forth into a chorus of praise for the hero-saint.

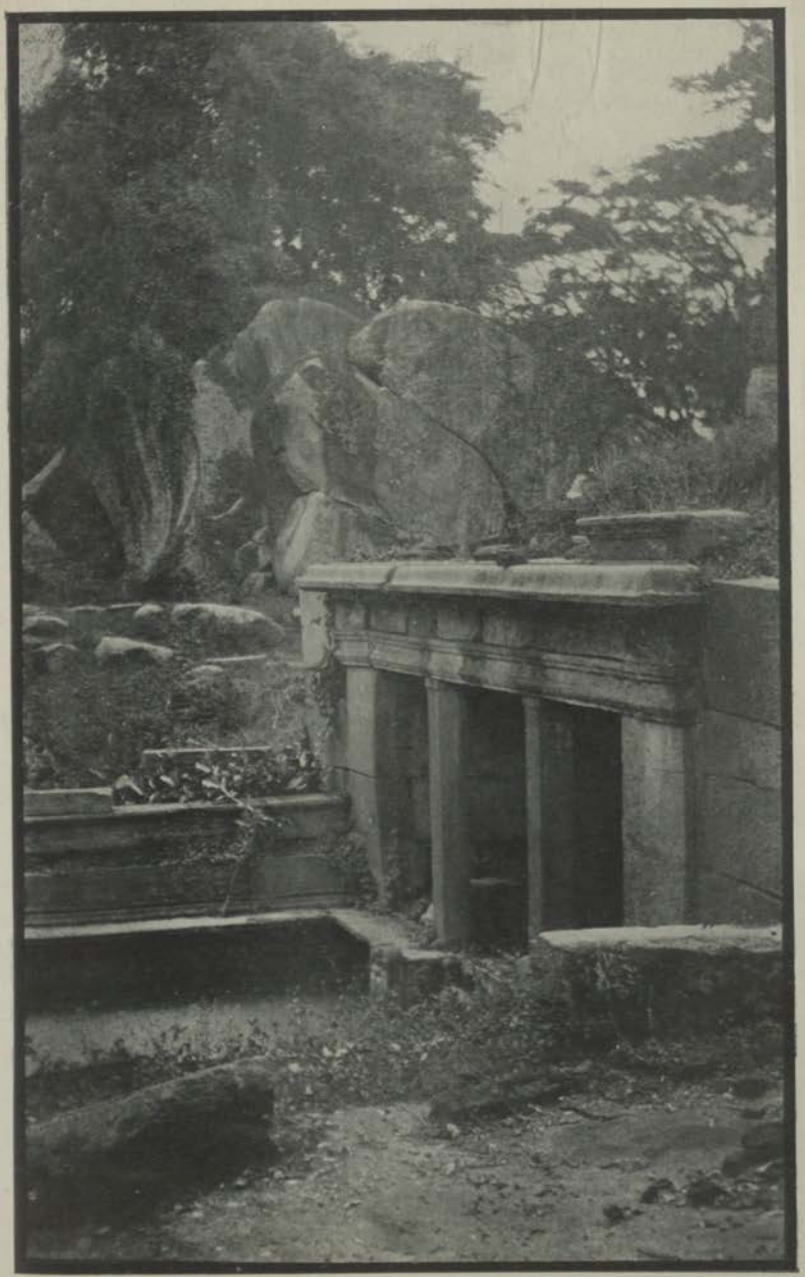
And Sakra, Lord of Lords, saw these things from his throne beyond the stars, and he conceived yet one more trial for Bodhisatta. Accordingly, he took upon himself the shape of a Brahman, and descended to Vessántăra's side in the forest, bidding him surrender even Madri, his wife. "And she said no word, nor wept, knowing her husband's heart, but stood like a statue, stupefied by that fresh burden of sorrow, and kept her eyes fixed upon him." So Vessántăra dared to give up even his wife in charity. And then Sakra, Lord of Lords, broke out in adoration of this holy spirit, and revealed himself, and joined once more the hands of Madri and Vessántăra. Also he foretold the speedy return of the children and

the reinstatement of the Prince. And so, in his glory, he returned to his throne beyond the stars. And all these things came to pass, for Sakra stirred up the Brahman, and the people, and the King. The Brahman at once repented, and brought back the children to their mother, and the populace recognized the supreme holiness of the Prince. So Vessántăra and Madri and their children went back in royal state to the city whence they had been driven in disgrace, and there in their time they ruled very happily for many prosperous years.

Behind Issurumuniya, with its shrined statues of Vessántăra Bodhisatta and the Sakra-Brahman, one mounts the steep embankment of Tissavewa Water, lying broad and smooth in the glow of early evening, fringed on all its shores with the heavy sombre lines of the jungle. And, if evening figures too large in my reminiscences, it must be remembered that only at evening do you ever get about at Anuradhapura, unless you choose to rise at early morning instead—a pleasure to which I have always been cold. Wandering along the embankment for a quarter of a mile or so, one drops down again upon a cleared copse, in which lie many strewn relics of old cloisters, and a long quiet pool buried in brushwood, like any English woodland piece of water. Here, as at Issurumuniya and Vessagiriya, lie scattered vast boulders that have been used for monastery buildings, carved into their hollows, fitted up over their slopes, or lodged in their interstices. All over this dim twilit space, with the high embankment close overhead on one side, and the forest closing it in on the other, are relics and fragments and remains of ancient habitations. Perhaps it is a strange wheel of life or circle of the zodiac, carved on an overhanging cliff by hands long forgotten, with some long-forgotten meaning that none can now discover, though the Abbot of Issurumuniya,

pausing before it, offers us an old traditional explanation. Or, just beyond, at the foot of another cliff, lies, still square and perfect, and filled with green slime of water, a double bath, square pool inside square pool, that once belonged to the monastery. Its dressing-room, supported on slender columns, is cut and carved, columns and all, from the living rock behind, and its roof wrought into the semblance of wooden beams. Bats haunt it now, and their musty smell is foul in the cavern, but the little pool is perfect as the day it was built, and half a day's labour would make it once more a worthy bathing-place for a Queen. As the gloaming descends upon the glade, these simple, beautiful relics stand yet more vivid amid the strewn remnants all round. One would say in the silence that they are momentarily awaiting the arrival of feet long crumbled, that they had tenants only yesterday, and would still have ghostly tenants to-day in the twilight, were but the disturbing intrusion of one's own bodily presence removed.

For this first pool is not the only carved treasure that huddles in the cliff's foot amid the débris and the fallen leaves of centuries. Just beyond there lies another pool—simpler, smaller, and yet in its way more elaborate. The first had a bath within a bath, regularly walled, with perfect copings and mouldings ; a carved dressing-chamber within the rock, and pillars cut from the same to hold the roof. This second one is rougher in design—a bald square, with a simple cavity cut in the sloping rock behind. But that slope is carved into the finest piece of naturalistic sculpture in Ceylon. Through a field of great lotuses wild elephants go trumpeting and plunging; their drawing, their execution, their spirit, is no less vivid and faultless than those of the elks and mammoths, drawn long since on bone by those first realists in art, the nameless savages of the Tarn



ROCK-HEWN BATHING-POOL NEAR ISSURUMUNIYA.

and Garonne. Delicate, fiery, skilful, this sculpture has every merit. Alas that it stands here, tragic and forgotten, open to the rains of the ages, veiled with dead leaves that lodge in the deep lines of the work, corroded by the damps and lichen of the dell !

And here the clearing ends. We must leave that forsaken bathing-place, that holy quiet spot amid the tangled tumbled rocks that range along the side of the wooded lake. We must climb the embankment, continue along it in the eye of sunset, and so, descending, wind by devious tracks along tiny rushing streams from the sluice, all bedded in greenery and great trees, past the grounds of the new hotel, back into the Sacred City.

CHAPTER XVIII

MIHINTALÉ, THE HOLY HILL

NOT in ordinary circumstances does a bullock-cart smile upon me. Slow, and slow beyond words, painful and lumbering, is one's progress in the tiny arched-in caravan, springless, like a section of a minute tunnel, agonizingly drawn at a foot's pace by two raw-boned bullocks, yoked under a broad pole, who, on the slightest provocation, back the whole concern down the embankment. But my host of the Sacred City, its present reigning sovereign, where once the abbots had their thrones and the Kings of Lanka set up their parasol of dominion, possesses a bullock-cart suited to his state. Roofed in with snowy canvas is this regal vehicle, buoyed up on springs, provided with seats of cushioned cane, and drawn by two goodly bullocks of the purest white. Comfortable, large, and fat, they show no bones like their common brothers; their huge round eyes have the dark serenity of Hera's; their humps are full of swaying dignity and ease; their whole demeanour has the bland impassive divineness of their immortal little stone prototypes that smile meekly, eternally, upon the jungle from their place in front of the Vishnu Dewâlé in forgotten Polonnarua.

And at my disposal one day was put this gracious vehicle, that I might make my last due progress to Mihintalé, following the footsteps of Kings and prophets and abbots of long ago. In the early, early morning must

I start, to go swaying through the silent dewy jungle, while yet the air is blue with the night's sweet moisture heavy on leaf and bough, before the ferocity of the sun has sucked the foliage dry and deluged the highway with glare. The world is empty of all sound as my carriage moves noiseless down the soft entrance-road beneath the immovable arch of the great trees overhead. A pearly translucence holds the park rather than any definite presence of light. Thick over thick long grass lie in uncounted unconsidered millions the evanescent jewels of night, ranged and showered over the broad breast of the world no less richly, no less impermanently, than ever corselet of emerald or ruby upon the colossal Buddhas that now sit dark and naked and broken in the jungle. In a decade, a century, an age, the glory must inevitably vanish from earthly shrine or palace as surely and as completely as, in an hour, will all the dew-gems have vanished from the grass, transformed into other activities. "Anicca, dukkha, anatta"—here is the everlasting lesson for ever fresh and inviolable. "Impermanent, full of disappointment, without fixed individuality" —such are all the works and ways of man in the world, no less than those of Nature.

So winds the road forward beneath the trees, past the sleeping energies of modern Anuradhapura. To the right, deep-sunk in the grass, appears the restored swimming-bath, which gives one some idea in what comfort and magnificence the monks of Maha Vihara once took their pious pleasure in cleanliness. It is an ample square, with cornices and outline decorations of carved stone. Of carved stone is the whole pool, and you go down by two splendid carved flights of stairs to the flagged depths, over which the water once lay dark, transparent, cool. The stairway pauses half-way down, and a path runs from

the landing right round the square to the further side. In the middle, between the two flights, is carved the cavern of the monks' apartment. The path leads round to the dressing-room and square pool within the greater pool, reserved for the higher dignitaries. Modern hands have replaced the lapsed blocks, and set up the fallen carvings of the stairway, so that To-day might have some notion of the splendour that was Yesterday in the Sacred City. And so one goes; passing the columned portico or guest-house that stands by the apex of the bazaar, passing the forested enclosure of the Holy Tree and the forested columns of the Brazen Palace that lie before it, one rolls at last out of the tiny modern settlement into the vast unexplored desolation of the ancient Anuradhapura, silent for ever in the jungle.

The road is at first that by which I entered the Sacred City so long ago, it seems, in the rain. Now I bid the sleeping settlement farewell, and pass out of Anuradhapura in the breathless promise of a day without a cloud. High overhead towers the ugly modern spire of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba, soon to be left behind in the woodland. Tropical corners of jungle begin to appear. These are rare in Ceylon, so far as my experience goes—that is to say, those sheeted curtains of liane and creeper that one imagines and reads about as making the marvel and the terror of South American forests. Here and there one sees the familiar illustration reproduced in Ceylon, but only here and there. On the Mihintalé road there comes one such corner, just as you are passing out of sight of Abhayagiriya Dâgaba. Winding marsh and pool glimmer silvery in the depths, in and out among the humped islets of verdure that rise from the slough; for wherever young sapling has sprung, or old stump decayed, a veil of dense emerald-green liane covers it from head to foot. Even

the tall aged trees that rise high behind this marish jungle are sheeted from crown to base with one brilliant uniform shroud of green, contrasting brightly with the leaden darkness of their verdure in the rare gaps where it is allowed to appear. Rich, tropical, terrific is this strangled vegetation. The rattan palm runs over all, throwing its long thorny runners high and higher over the trees, and at intervals spraying forth the lacy frondage of its leaves.

Eight miles away lies the Holy Hill of Mihintalé, from which, like a dazzling light, the Faith first radiated throughout Ceylon. Sacred, and many times sacred, is this road, approximately the same by which the Prince Apostle Mahinda made his first entrance into the royal city after his memorable talk with King Devanampiyatissa on the site of Ambastála Dâgaba. Many the King and many the abbot that has since trod the way to Mihintalé, traversing the long miles on regal elephant or humbly on foot, as the vows of the Church compel the ecclesiastic, but none in more comfort or dignity than I, sliding softly up the long low slopes of the road, and down again through the interminable vistas of the dark jungle to right and left, until at last, just as the sun is beginning to feel his full possibilities, we draw up at the Rest-house, and see beyond us, over a level space of meadow, the thousand-foot wall of forest that is the Holy Hill of Mihintalé. So here the milk-white divinities are unyoked and sent to rest, while I must needs, impatient of delays, sally forth in the sunlight to see the marvels of the great mountain that is all one consecrated abbey from end to end, from base to crown.

For every inch of ground about Mihintalé, not only on the hill itself, but in all the plains and valleys at its base, has been appropriated to holiness. If one follows the road leading south, and far too rarely trodden by the

tourist, one will gain some notion of the innumerable religious activities that held all the land round the foot of the sacrosanct mountain. Ruins are everywhere, and a low crumbling wall divides the road from a cleared meadow to the right, which is filled with the relics of a bygone monastery. Conspicuous stands the platform and carved dome of what must once have been a very lovely little dâgaba. Now the whole thing is a wreck, the carvings fallen, the drum itself become a *jardinière* for tangled bush and bramble. This is called the Sela Chaitya, and makes the finest figure among the wreckage of monastery and shrine that hedges the roadway. For this is the old sacred way from the Holy Hill to the Sacred City, and the long ruins of the double wall show the path by which Mahinda the Apostle made his triumphal entrance into Anuradhapura. Continuing for a while along the road till it passes into the cool shade of the forest, one turns aside to the left into the glade, where water glimmers far off amid the tree-trunks.

Soon one comes out upon the shore of a beautiful artificial lake befringed with immense trees, bending far across the glassy surface. This is the Kaludiya Pôkŭna, the Pool of Dark Waters, filling the whole hollow beneath the southern pinnacle of Mihintalé and its steep slope all honeycombed with cells. Ruins and ancient stone-work surround the water, glimmering grey amid the trees, and ruined stairways go down into the dark waters. In the forest all around you may see everywhere the remains of happy hermitage or preaching-place. Beneath the wall of some huge overhanging rock in the soft gloaming of the woodland some forgotten monk made a supporting wall and formed himself a little dwelling ; then, up the crest of a towering knife-edge boulder, he cut him steps to the summit, so that, mounting to that eminence, he might

preach the word to the assembled multitudes seated far down below at the cliff's foot, along the calm shores of the lake. Such traces of vanished holy occupation are thick in the forests that now clothe Mihintalé, and try to bury the Pool of Dark Waters ; but now the shores of the lake are tenantless and void, the forest empty of all holy voices. Yet further on, high up the slopes of the opposite hill, hermits still dwell in the ancient rock-caverns of Raja Giriléna, and tell how the leopards, elephants, and wild bears come ravening amid the tumbled boulders through the dark. For in stony hollows and between the clefts of fallen rock the wild black bear has his chosen haunt on Mihintalé, and the pious, unarmed with lethal weapon, must arm himself instead with persuasive arguments and pleas if he will safely roam the screes and copses of Mihintalé at twilight, or after rain has fallen. Not gifted with tongues, I feel I might be at a loss for words to convince a wild black bear that he will gain piety by not attempting to devour me, and therefore bless myself from rain, and contemplate the cloudless midday with satisfaction.

From the Kaludiya Pôkŭna one returns along the highway to the foot of the Holy Hill. A footpath, broad and cool and green, leads you through the jungle, with all its ruins, to the very foot of the slope. And there you begin to understand the grandeur of the old great works, for a vast stairway leads you upward, broad, shallow-stepped, majestic, magnificent. Now it is broken, and its lines forced out of drawing; but even to this day one can mount it with a sense of the splendour that must have attended the royal and ecclesiastical processions that so often went up and down in state. From the top of this flight one reaches the first terrace, and a second flight, no less splendid, leads onwards and upwards to the next. On

the landing once stood several little dâgabas, that are now in undistinguishable ruin. Each probably enshrined the ashes of some monk or abbot. To the right, up into the wild forest, a minor stairway leads to yet another ruined dâgaba. But, indeed, every inch of Mihintalé, from end to end, is so densely crowded, over hollow and slope and cliff, with cell, dâgaba, monastery building, that to catalogue them all would be wearisome and useless, merely confusing one's salient impressions with overloaded effects. But for days and days might one roam happily amid the woodland over the steeps of Mihintalé, discovering fresh relic on fresh relic lost in the greenery, and coming from time to time upon some yellow-robed hermit, meditating wisdom here to-day in a cell where his forefathers first discerned it more than two thousand years ago.

The second great stairway leads up to a second landing, whence one may diverge through thorns, to a ledge of scented bushes on the left fronting a long rank of rock-cells ; then, returning to the steps, one mounts the third royal flight, up and up, through thinning trees, with the landscape widening behind you at every step, to the third royal landing. This is, rather, a terrace, broad and splendid, with which begins the Abbey proper of Mihintalé. One makes one's entrance through what was originally a portico, whose grim grey columns stand bare and desolate now against the blank verdure of the forest all round. To right and left the plan of sacred buildings is evident, and a few steps to the left bring you to an abandoned rice-trough, like that of the Mahapali, whence, evidently, in the building that once sheltered it, the monks and pilgrims of Mihintalé received their portion. Leaving this ample alms-hall one goes back to the path, and so up a few yards more to another divergence on the left, where, high over the bushes in the thicket, stand two enormous

monolithic slabs conveying grants and privileges to Mihintalé and Abhayagiriya from Mahinda the Fifth in the tenth century. They stand like vast cheval-glasses of stone, dark and impressive there in the jungle; only one, indeed, is a monolith, its moulded frame being in one piece with the inscription-slab ; from the other the frame has cracked and broken in pieces. Beyond these are more buildings, and more and more, buried and forgotten in the forest, for the hand of the archæologist has never yet been thoroughly laid against the Holy Hill.

From here, if one chooses, one may diverge from the path and penetrate the forest to the right. A pleasant track leads over the soundless earth up and down the sunlit glades of the woodland, and past the relics of little pillared shrine after pillared shrine, until one stops at the huge stone basin that is called Mahinda's Bath. The Prince-Apostle dominates popular imagination, as is only to be expected, and everything, especially at Mihintalé, his most sacred place, is associated with his name. In reality, this is a big square cistern conveying water to some vanished cloister. It is very lovely, standing out in the warm green light from the cloudy greens of the hill-side. The water is poured by a gargoyle carved into a lion's head, and the dado of the magnificent cistern, divided into compartments by a convention of pillars, is decorated with figures in high relief, of boys wrestling, animals, grotesques. Beyond this, and beyond and beyond, interminable ruins cover the slopes of the mountain far down and away to the Kaludiya Pôkŭna.

Now we have done with the three great stairways, their landings and terraces. We are many hundred feet above the plain, and now a long, narrow flight of steps leads obliquely up through the forest towards the Place of the Mango. The low wall to right and left is all a film and

lacework of fine ferns, and high over the narrow way the green vault of the forest intercepts all but the softest glow of green. So we mount and mount, to come out at last on a vast slide of bare black rock, beaten with the pitiless rays of the sun. Steps have been cut in this, so that its incline is easy to scale. Far to the right from this you may make your way through dense, thick grasses, whose swaying heads in the early morning drench you with their dew, to the Snake Pool, the Naga Pôkŭna, an elfin hollow, long, silent, mysterious, of black cold water nestling under the shade of a black high cliff. From the rock-face is carved the tapering neck, spread hood, and head of an enormous cobra, the rest of whose coils, says tradition, are faithfully continued in carving to the invisible depths of the pool. Menacing and holy, the dark snake broods over his waters, and on their black surface wavers his reflection, making two serpents poised against each other. From the Naga Pôkŭna one returns to the terrace, and so up the smooth slope past ruined dâgabas of abbots long dead, and rock-cut inscriptions in the living cliff by Kings whose every other act has perished. At the head of the steep ascent, embowered in bushes of brilliant blossom, dazzling in the sunlight, stands above us at last the gate-house. We climb the final steps in breathless haste to be done with that hot rock, and then, from the frame of the porch find ourselves looking straight through into the restful greens, the shadowed charm that bless the quiet Dell of the Mango.

Here we are, as it were, in the culminating depression between the highest cusps of Mihintalé Mountain. On three sides rise higher eminences, and between them lies this level, pleasant space. Vast palms wave their heavy fronds, and their tapering columns waver in the wind. The whole spot is a sacred grove of peace and coolness.

And as the Ambastála is to-day, so has the Ambastála been for two score of centuries. In the centre of the space, dappled with the sunlight that filters through the palms, rises the dome of the Ambastála Dâgaba itself—small, but most holy, for here lie half the sacred ashes of Mahinda, the Prince-Apostle. This spot—where stands the dâgaba in the midst of its platform, with gracious circle of pillars all around, as at Thûparâma and "Lankarama"—is the very place where once stood the mango-tree, in far-off days, from whose shelter that yellow-robed figure so astonished King Devanampiyatissa on his famous hunting-day, proclaiming the salvation of Lanka and the triumph of the Faith. And here, where he first stood to preach the Word, lie now the flaked bones and ashes that once made part of Mahinda the saint. Half of them only rest here indeed: the rest are divided up amongst the oldest shrines in Lanka. And a pleasant place is Ambastála, to be tenanted by so noble a memory. Quiet and beautiful are the lines of the dâgaba itself, its dome now clean and glistening. In former generations it was so thickly furred with rust and fungus that it was called the brown-velvet dâgaba. But those were times of neglect; to-day, in the revival of the Faith, there is established a new monastery here at Ambastála, where monks have dwelt for so many centuries, and the sacred dâgaba, its pillars and platform, are objects of pious care. In the soft green lights amid the palms the precinct is tranquil, warm, delicious. As the yellow-robed monks cross the pavement on their businesses the orange of their garments is fired by splashes of sunlight to a rich ferocity of old gold.

The pavement of the Ambastála is rich with relics. On one side nestle, under the slope, the new preaching-hall, the new dwellings of prior and monks. The rest of the walled expanse, whose wall is still dense with weeds, is

devoted to the remains of bygone sanctities and crumbled little dâgabas of bygone abbots. Graceful rise the pillars of the shrine amid the encircling palms, and on their ornate capitals is carved the sacred goose of Brahma, to indicate the care that the Father of All Things has for the most Perfect Faith that subdued the older gods without denying them. In the centre rises the spired dome of Mahinda's tomb; but the present point is modern, of brick and plaster, the old spire being a monolith, that now lies on the platform. Four shrines stand, as is proper, round the dâgaba, and on the south side a statue described, with no great authority, as that of King Devanampiyatissa. Close to this an ordinary-looking slab let into the pavement is guarded by a tall iron railing. Before paying the reverence one should, one has to be told that this is the mysterious Chandra-pasâna, the holy stone brought long ago from the topmost pinnacle of Himachâl. Very sacrosanct are the Himâlyas in Buddhist tradition, for holiness is happiest and least trammelled on the mountain heights: and this slab of stone from the sacred range is venerated here with a deep veneration. At night, they say, it glows with a faint and awe-inspiring radiance—the only stone in the world endowed with this mysterious property.

From its first foundation, in the third century B.C., the Ambastâla has been a place of the utmost sanctity—ever since Mahinda attained his Parinibban, and King Uttiya built the dâgaba in the year 275. To this day, of course, it is more and more the centre of pilgrimage, and from all the world come adoring crowds to see the spot whence the Buddha first claimed allegiance from a people which has been ever since, according to its lights, his very enthusiastic servant. And of all the shrines of the Sacred City, it is probable that the Ambastâla has been the least disturbed, renovated, everted. Of course,

the indefatigable P'rakram' Bahu the Great had his turn of restoration here, and in the eighth century there had also been made some necessary repairs to the monastery buildings. But the dâgaba does not appear to have suffered severely, and in all probability the ashes of the saint are still reposing in its core. The worst part of the mountain's story comes in the third century of our era, when that magnificent heretic, Maha Séna, ruled the land. For after his quarrel with the Great Abbey was patched up, the King seems to have been strong enough to make over Mihintalé to his seceding brotherhood of Abhayagiriya: and in their hands it continued for many centuries. Thus Mahinda the Fifth, we have seen, in the tenth century, here on Mihintalé records benefits done to the combined establishments of Mihintalé and Abhayagiriya, from which we may infer that the triumph of Maha Vihara over the schismatic King was not by any means so complete as the Mahavansa would like us to believe. The mighty Dhatuséna, indeed, powerful and energetic and orthodox, did afterwards make an attempt to restore Mihintalé to orthodox hands. But he yielded at last to the entreaty of the monks in possession, and left Mihintalé under the guard of the heretics and their uncanonical Vetuliya Scriptures.

High above the dâgaba rises a naked pinnacle of rock, sheer into the blue. There is a way up this, and one may ascend by help of an iron railing ; but there is little gained in doing so ; the ascent is troublesome, and in a high wind the peak is perilous. This is the point on which, according to tradition, Mahinda alighted at the end of his journey through the air: for, after his dramatic and wholly unexpected appearance at the Dell of the Mango, sacred tradition was of course much concerned with his journey, and must needs insist that his means of pro-

gression were miraculous. Through the air from India, says the chronicle, floated the princely son of Asoka, duly to land on the topmost rock-pinnacle of the Holy Hill; and to that pinnacle, accordingly, the devout make perilous pilgrimages.

More immediately interesting than this is the path that leads straight across the platform to the cliff at the further side. You pass the crumbling dâgabas on the pavement that hold the ashes of forgotten abbots, you pass the grass-grown wall of the precinct, and so you come to the monks' dwellings beneath the rock, where, in the shadow of the cliff, their yellow robes, stretched out to dry after dyeing, make brilliant flares of orange against the darkness of cave and cliff behind. Thence a break-neck little path leads down the sheer slope of the mountain through a fertile little rocky ravine, rich with the heavy fan-foliage of banana and other lush herbage of the monks' gardens, on down a gully of shrubs, overhung by gigantic poised boulders that threaten at every moment to crash together like the Symplegades; and the path ends at last before the greatest of these—a rock, flattened, oval, as large as a church, just balanced on edge upon a pedestal of a smaller boulder, from which the hill-side falls sheer and far to the plain 1,000 feet below; and in the giant pebble is gnawed a small arched hole at its base, resting on the rock-slope beneath. To this one climbs over a huddle of fallen blocks by a small iron stairway, and there in that tiny cavern of draughts, open on either side to all the airs that blow, some saint, abbot, or hermit of the dead centuries once made his lair. The holy space is filled with a rectangle carved for a bed, and made smooth by many years of pious occupation. Sweet flowers are there laid to this day in reverence for the sanctity that sought meditation and enlightenment here. For legend

says that this hermitage was chosen by no less a personage than Mahinda himself, and popular tradition calls the place "Mahinda's Bed." Be this as it may, the anchorite who retired here had before his eyes a spectacle more illuminating than most. Through the arching frame of rock the eye looks insatiably out from that high place on the shelving cliff, over mile after mile after blue mile of flat forest, into the pale violet distances of the uttermost jungle far below, fading in plane after plane of amethyst, into the pale violet of the furthest horizon, where the wild and jagged mountain-ranges rise on the rim of the world, like islands towering from the smooth immovable level that seems to cover all the curving globe from here. Palaces and temples may fade from the memory; ineffaceably written on one's soul remains that enormous placid prospect, that vast and awful peace, implacable, impenetrable, imperturbable, which makes the mysterious and compelling sanctity of this view from the Bed of the Saint. It has a quality of perfect detachment, of superhuman exaltation; that high place hangs far above the world, and is not of the world. As one gazes, the feet of one's soul float free of earth, and one's whole being achieves the miracle of levitation, soaring untrammelled in the ocean of eternity, where time and space and matter are no longer even words.

Returning thence at last, up the steep rugged little path that leads back to the Ambastála, one has yet one more pilgrimage to make before one has done with the associations of the Sacred City. Beyond the Ambastála, far above the waving palm-trees and the pillars, rises a huge domed summit of the mountain, and only after long contemplation can one realize that that rounded eminence is no natural rock, but the crumbling majesty of a vast dâgaba perched, like a crown, on a pinnacle of the long

ridge that is Mihintalé, the Holy Hill. The mouldering brickwork of the dome chimes in now with the red-grey rocks, and its lines are blurred with grass; the whole orbed building makes one with Nature now that all its decorations of plaster and glaze are gone. And this is Maha Seya Dâgaba, inviolate shrine of the Hair-Relic.

From the Ambastâla to the Maha Seya our way lies up a steep naked slope of rock, into which steps have been cut. One goes between two holy trees that are loaded with flowers I have never seen before—huge clusters of huge blossoms, round, creamy-yellow, eyed with a central boss of golden stamens, carried in their abundance when all the tree is bare and naked and grey. Temple-flowers there are in profusion at Mihintalé, as at all the shrines, no matter how ancient and desolate, but nowhere else did I see these other lovely blooms. Passing these, the way climbs stiffly under the unpitying glare until we reach the platform of Maha Seya. This, poised on a high cusp of the ridge, has, of course, in process of decay, threatened to moulder away altogether, and go crumbling down on all sides to the plain 1,000 feet below. Therefore wise hands of bygone governors have tended it, and made the round drum secure on its height. About the dome there runs a levelled path, and one can make the circuit of the building, marking where rude weeds have scorned the sanctity of its associations, or, perhaps, have contributed in their own way to its sanctity by taking shelter there. And from the western face of that circuit there flashes upon one all the delusive glory of the world, on which note most fitly closes my memory of Ceylon.

We are looking straight across the west. Below us runs out over the jungle the last grass-clad spur of Mihintalé, to end in the green eminence on which stands the ruin of Et Véhéra, last of the sacred buildings on the

"LANKARÂMA" DÂGABA.

range, and beyond this there is nothing but the stupendous and overwhelming plain of the jungle-sea, sliding away in shades of azure across the receding curve of earth. Far, and far, and far—seeming illimitable as the apparently illimitable sea of Birth and Death—the great Northern Plain goes stretching from horizon to pale horizon, one undecipherable motionless ocean of jungle, broken only here and there by those sudden purple islets of mountain and pinnacle. Larger, wider, more infinite than anything I have ever seen, is that prospect from the rim of Maha Seya Dâgaba; it almost makes one gasp with a sense of looking on something too large for mortal sense, too calm, too eternal to be grasped by frail mortal understanding, to be borne by mortal endurance; so apt as we are to be terrified and overwhelmed by the suggestion of realms immeasurable in terms of time and space.

And there, full in the middle of the view, lies sleeping the Sacred City. From end to end its relics lie extended before us, and from their extent we suddenly realize that all this eternal sea of woodland was once crowded with a glory of building that its creators deemed to be no less eternal than we, to-day, conceive the unbroken silence of the forest. Anuradhapura lies far across the world from east to west. Anuradhapura now is nothing but a memory —a phantom dimly to be recalled amid the dense wilderness that holds its place. Only above the verdure the three royal lakes—silver shields forgotten in the forest—throw up clear gleaming surfaces amid the vast monotony; and, one by one, as the eye learns to pierce the levels of the prospect, the five great dâgabas stand high above the jungle, hillocks of greenery above the green, where once they were mountains of snow and gilding, above innumerable lower ranges of golden palace and cloister. Out in the north, lonely and splendid, Jétavánarâma keeps guard

over all the unguessed miles of ruin that fill the forest at its feet; then comes Abhayagiriya, towering over the invisible little hamlet which is modern Anuradhapura. The park behind is but a smear of brighter emerald amid the uniformity, and only a chance gleam of whiteness lets you guess where holy Thûparâma stands placid amongst its pillars. Beyond this rises close to westward the grass-grown dome of Ruanwéli, hardly to be discerned amid the green; and the last of all is the red globe of Mirisawétiya, glowing from its eminence over the village. From here one can track all the patches of culture, past and present—the plan of the parks, the rich forest along the lake embankments, the rice-fields and brilliant stretches of cultivation that lie on the skirts of the Sacred City towards Issurumuniya and Vessagiriya, towards Jétavánarâma and Abhayagiriya. Though from the tee of Abhayagiriya itself one has the view in closer detail, and is able to discern the flaming orange of the big Spathodea trees in bloom, the appalling scarlet of *Poinciana regia*, it is here, from Maha Seya, on the heights of the Holy Hill, that one has one's last best sight of the Sacred City.

The whole purpose of the thing lies apparent from here—its whole history, its whole doom. Nowhere in the world is the utter grandeur, the utter ruin, of a city and a nation so apparent as when one looks from Mihintalé out across the interminable jungle that was once the gorgeous capital of Ceylon. Almost beyond guesswork the splendour has receded into the unfathomable past, and yet, in a way, its scanty bones, its very abandonment of hopelessness, enable one to feel more keenly than ever the splendid things that once were, by contrast with the jumbled tragedy of what now is. Rome of to-day is a mean thing, the Forum a mean jostle of littleness, compared with the extended enormous ruin of the Sacred City—vast, resigned

silent, leisurely, with full consciousness of an eternity of desolation to face. Gone and vanished are the golden Kings and abbots; of their palaces remain but sordid, naked beams of hewn stone, lost in the grass, standing at drunken angles in forgotten gloamings of the forest, glimmering in the green depths of the jungle-sea like weed-grown wreckage of great galleons foundered a hundred centuries since. Their ghostly life is now but the life of the forest; lizards flirt their tails in the blurred faces of the statues, and wise-faced apes go swinging foolishly from bough to bough of the Sacred Tree itself. Only the holiness that made them and dwelt in them still lives, and lives for ever. For holiness and devotion are the immortal parts of life—are the only realities of life.

And so, as one gazes out over the waste of Anuradhapura, and repeats the invocation, "Anicca, dukkha, anatta"—"Impermanent, full of disappointment, without fixed personality"—one realizes also that in the higher sense these things, and all lovely things of good intent, *are* permanent, filled with perfect satisfaction, radiant with an eternal fixed personality that must outlast the stars and the universe.

Farewell, then, to the earthly relics of the Sacred City, which is the soul of Ceylon, sleeping peaceful there for ever across the plains of forest that fill the world from the high places of Mihintalé. And after Anuradhapura there is nothing else to think of in Ceylon, nor ever can be.

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